



No 3,847

THE INDEPENDENT

SATURDAY 13 FEBRUARY 1999

(1R80p) 70p

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'Senators, how say you?' 'Not guilty on all counts'

BILL CLINTON could breathe easily last night for the first time in 13 months, after the incusus of the Monica Lewinsky affair was finally lifted from his presidency.

In only the second such impeachment vote in its history, the US Senate handsomely acquitted William Jefferson Clinton, President of the United States, of the two Articles of Impeachment against him, making him not only the second President to be impeached and tried, but the second to prevail. He also avoided any formal motion of censure, which was rejected by the Senate without a vote.

The final votes – 55-45 against conviction on the charges of perjury, 50-50 on the obstruction of justice charges – in a Senate where Mr Clinton's Republican opponents enjoy a majority, constituted a triumph for the President and

BY MARY DEJEVSKY AND
ANDREW MARSHALL
in Washington

from his or her seat to deliver their verdict. For the half-hour duration of the two votes, the Senate was in utter silence, but for the single questions and answers called across the chamber.

The Democrats' vote held solid for "not guilty"; but with nine Republicans defecting on the perjury charge, and five on the obstruction of justice charge, Mr Clinton was acquitted even more convincingly than expected, and considerably more than Andrew Johnson, who survived removal from office by a single vote.

At the close of proceedings, the Chief Justice was presented with a "golden gavel" – an award reserved for Congressional chairmen who have presided for 100 hours – and given a standing ovation. In a closing speech, Mr Rehnquist spoke of the "more free-form environment" he had found at the Senate compared with his own Supreme Court, but said he was leaving "a wiser; but not a sadder man".

A Senate trial, a splicing of politics and justice, is one of the rare times when the three branches of the United States system come together. Hailed as a living "civics" lesson for Americans, it was also a demonstration for the world of American democracy at its limits.

The President was expected to make some form of address after the vote, acknowledging once again the pain he had caused his family and colleagues.

The presidential line is that the White House will be a "gloat-free zone" after impeachment is swept away, with the President expected instead to give the impression that he wants business as usual to resume. Spokesmen said there was a "sense of relief", but were not even sure whether the President would watch the key moment on television.

The White House has discounted reports that it will use every opportunity to get back at the Congressional Republicans who led the impeachment assault, saying that would be counterproductive.

Of the Republican senators who gave public explanations of their decision to break with their party's "guilty" consensus, a majority cited legal considerations, including the fact that in their view the evidence was exclusively circum-

stantial. Political considerations were not far away, however, as the majority represent states where pro-Clinton sentiment is strong.

Arlen Specter, from Pennsylvania, distinguished himself by calling out "not proven" when asked for his vote, a non-constitutional option that was recorded, after a frisson, as "not guilty".

Even though the last elections are only three months past, Washington is already gearing up for the 2000 elections, with presidential candidates emerging from the Republican Party, fund-raising activity getting into high gear and lists of vulnerable Congressional districts being drawn up.

The Democrats will try to capitalise on their lead in the polls, which is partly derived from public antagonism towards the Republican stance on impeachment.

The final public chapter of

the Bill and Monica affair closed a year that had seen comedy and tragedy in equal measure and tested every pillar of American society and its democracy.

It had augmented American discourse at every level, from high political and constitutional argument through inspirational rhetoric, to ribald anecdotes and coarse innuendo.

It had also seen the return of some of its leading characters in the final week: the filming of her young friend started the whole sorry scandal.

While the public aspects of the Monica Lewinsky affair are now closed, the private pain will probably persist. There has been only speculation about the harm that Mr Clinton has caused to his family.

testimony of the leading lady, Monica Lewinsky, in the Senate chamber, and yesterday, in the press and on television, the self-defence of Linda Tripp, the woman whose tape-recordings of her young friend started the whole sorry scandal.

On 6th Avenue, Rich Mungchessang, a building engineer, was clearing a street drain outside Rupert Murdoch's Fox News Channel. But Mr Mungchessang had tuned out months ago. "So he lied, but what was he meant to say there, right in front of his wife? That he had slept with another woman?"

The news programmers are going to have to find new subjects to report, but the Lewinsky affair is just heating up for the publishing industry, which is expected to unleash an avalanche of titles. Among them there will be, *Ask Not, Tell Not: The Triangulation of William Jefferson Clinton, and The Point of Knives: The Triumph and Tragedy of Kenneth Starr*. Whether there are readers out there with enough appetite for such books remains to be seen. One, however, is certain to get attention. It is *Monica's Story*, compiled by Ms Lewinsky with the help of the British biographer Andrew Morton.

Shrug from the sidewalk in Main St, USA

IF YOU wanted to know the outcome of the trial of President Clinton – as if it was in much doubt – Times Square was the place to be. You could not miss the acquittal headlines rushing by on the electronic ticker or blaring from the NBC Jumbotron – a giant TV suspended in the sky – at the square's southern end.

This, though, was an historic event without an audience. "Trial? What trial?" asked Jimmy Funghini, the doorman at the Doubletree Hotel, under the shadow of the Jumbotron. He was joking, of course, but

BY DAVID USBORNE
in New York

ini. "But I never believed that he should be impeached, I just don't think so."

On the corner by the hotel, a white-bearded tramp was collecting money in an old cigar box. From Puerto Rico, Abraham said: "I told my people before the trial started that he was going to get off. Listen, they all do it down there and the Republicans were paying people to go after the President."

Not that the President comes out smelling like Valentine's roses. "He needs a smack right on the back of the head for what he did – really, he was pretty stupid," said Mr Funghini.

who asked to remain anonymous, thought the President should have been thrown out. "If I had committed perjury and lied like he did, I would have been out of a job and people would have been angry if I didn't lose my job," the officer explained.

And there were hints of chargin too on 47th Street, lined with jewellery shops owned by the Jewish community. "He lied and he owes another apology to Lewinsky," said one owner, who gave only his first name, Abe. "You know there are plenty of people who committed perjury

who are sitting in jail now. Clinton is happy-go-lucky and he gets away with it. That bothers me."

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INSIDE THIS SECTION

Art fraud trial ends
John Drewe was found guilty of the biggest contemporary art fraud
Home P5

GM foods warning
Scientists warned of the dangers of GM foods
Home P6

Horn of Africa
Ethiopia and Eritrea again rejected UN calls to end hostilities
Foreign P13

Game lawsuit
A \$4m award is turning point for anti-gambling lobby
Foreign P15

Bank signals merger
Lloyds-TSB signalled its readiness to join the wave of bank mergers
Business P18

Cotton's view
Fran Cotton gives Brian Viner his vision of rugby
Sport P21

Old Romantics
The English gentleman is a narcissistic poseur and effete at that
Review Front

Fergal Keane
Have the days of the poet laureate passed?
Comment P3

Week in review
Our critics take a look at the best of this week's arts
Arts P13

A serpent's tale
Jeremy Seal's stories of snakes alive and dead
Books P14

TODAY'S TELEVISION
BACK PAGE

LETTERS 2 LEADERS & COMMENT 3-7 FEATURES 8-9 OBITUARIES 10-11 ARTS 12-13 BOOKS 14-16 COUNTRY 17-18 TRAVEL 19-23

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD
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THE INDEPENDENT

New sections, more readers

Next week, The Independent will be even bigger and better. On Monday, we launch a new 12-page broadsheet sports supplement, which will include reports and analysis of the weekend's action by our award-winning team of writers and photographers. As well as reports from the FA Cup fifth round, England's one-day cricket final against Australia, and grand prix athletics from Birmingham, Richard Williams is granted a frank interview with Will Carling, and Brian Viner begins a new weekly column.

Plus, a new, comprehensive briefing for the week ahead, a look at the best sports sites on the Internet and an expanded racing service. Every Monday, it's a must-read for sports fans.

And on Wednesday next week, we are launching a new weekly business supplement, Business Review. This will be in addition to the business pages in the news section, and will contain interviews, comment and features from our acclaimed team of writers including Hamish McRae, Jeremy Warner, Diane Coyle and Nic Cicuti. We shall also be improving our Wednesday investment pages with more tips on how to make your money work best for you.

These two new sections are launched at a time of renewed success for The Independent and The Independent on Sunday. The Independent's audited circulation for January is 219,541, an increase of more than 1,000 copies a day on our December figure. The Independent on Sunday's January figure is 252,587, a rise of almost 3,000.

Further recognition for the quality of both papers' journalism came in this week's announcement of the shortlist for the British Press Awards.

Five of our writers have been shortlisted:

Hamish McRae (Financial Journalist of the Year); Deborah Ross (Feature Writer of the Year); John Lichfield (Foreign Reporter of the Year); Donald Macintyre (Specialist Reporter of the Year) and Blake Morrison (Critic of the Year).

The Independent. Don't miss it



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Communications Week International

CLINTON ACQUITTED

...TO MONICA LEWINSKY, THE STARR REPORT, IMPEACHMENT BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND THE FINAL SENATE VERDICT	
6 August	Lewinsky testifies in front of a grand jury for six hours.
17 August	On the day of his long-awaited testimony the President tells the grand jury, and the nation, that he had a relationship with Lewinsky that was "not appropriate." He does not apologise.
20 August	Clinton orders the bombing of a "chemical weapons plant" in Sudan and a terrorist base in Afghanistan.
4 September	Clinton apologises for the affair: "I'm sorry," he tells
11 September	The Starr report, in all its damning, lurid detail, is published on the Internet.
21 September	Clinton's video testimony to the grand jury is shown on TV, but it does not trigger his anticipated downfall.
3 November	Democrats increase seats in the Congressional mid-term elections - a massive boost for Clinton.
23 November	House Speaker-elect Bob Livingston insists he wants an
IV.	impeachment vote even if it appears it will go in favour of the President.
9 December	The House Judiciary committee proposes four articles of impeachment.
19 December	The House votes to impeach Clinton.
20 December	Polls show Clinton's approval rating still rising.
7 January 1999	Impeachment trial of the President begins in Senate. Chief Justice William Rehnquist sworn in to preside. He swears in the 100 senators as jurors.
18 December	Congressmen launch into a heated and controversial debate on impeachment.
24 January	Monica Lewinsky is interviewed privately by House prosecutors.
28 January	The Senate rejects a motion to dismiss the charges. It authorises subpoenas for questioning of Monica Lewinsky, Vernon Jordan and Sidney Blumenthal.
1-3 February	Lewinsky, Jordan and Blumenthal give video deposition to House managers and the president's lawyers.
4 February	Senate votes to allow show-
ing of the videotaped testimony during the trial. Senators reject calling live witnesses.	
6 February	Clips from the videotaped testimony of Lewinsky, Jordan and Blumenthal as well as Clinton are played publicly at the Senate trial.
8 February	House managers and White House lawyers present closing arguments.
9 February	Senate declines to change rules to allow open deliberations on impeachment articles and begins private deliberations.
12 February	Senate votes. President Clinton survives.

Scandal Now the real reckoning for a shamed President

POLITICAL PROSPECTS

THE SMOKE has started to clear from the battlefield. The political casualties on both sides are being counted, and - on the Republican side at least, they are huge. But out of the mists of battle, President Bill Clinton emerges still in office, as large as life and twice as boisterous, with two years of his Presidency left to run.

The past year has focused, to an unprecedented degree, on him or his intimate life and his personal habits. The issue was not, as it was with Richard Nixon, all those angular staff members plotting war in the furthest corners of South east Asia while breeding dark conspiracies closer to home.

All of the accessories here - the Betty Curries and Vernon Jordans, ambassadors and private detectives - were apparently subordinate to the earthly desires of one man. President William Jefferson Clinton, and the ways in which he had gone about concealing them.

And it is tempting to conclude that his salvation, too, lay ultimately within himself, in his personal resources of strength and his popularity in the country.

He argued from the beginning to his former adviser Dick Morris that it would be necessary to struggle to win the case that there were no short cuts. After he and Morris had discussed the possibility of an immediate admission of guilt, he concluded that that there was only one way out. "We just have to win," Mr Clinton said.

If there is one thing the past year has taught us about Bill Clinton - if we did not know it

BY ANDREW MARSHALL
in Washington

already - it is his remarkable resolve in the face of crisis, his ability to turn a major setback into a rousing victory.

He has three tasks ahead of him. The first is to show that he will move on, that politics is now about America and not about him. The second is to create a platform that will pay dividends for the Democrats in the next elections. The third, which will be the most difficult, is to persuade Americans that his Presidency was about more than just sex, lying about sex, and the obstruction of justice.

There will be plenty of talk in the next few days about the huge damage done to political institutions, to the Presidency, to politics itself, and most of it - in the short term - can be written off. The President has confounded his enemies, and he has emerged above the fray.

The institution of the Presidency has been weakened for decades, at least since Watergate, arguably since Lyndon B Johnson's decision not to stand again in 1968 after the disasters of Vietnam. Bill Clinton's personal life may be in ruins, his dignity may be in shreds, but he is still President. And he has huge assets to deploy. What saved him was in part, the astonishing way he has of communicating with the people of America, individually, en masse, on television, from the rostrum of the flagstaves. It is a pre-modern skill; it draws those around him, mystifies and fascinates them.

He will go out into America,

campaign before the election even gets under way and make some noise. He also has a firmer grasp on his own party than ever before.

Relationships have been formed under fire for the past year that will be crucial in the next 12 months, especially with Richard Gephardt, leader of the Democrats in the House. With Mr Gephardt and the Vice-President, Al Gore, he will now start to shape a strategy for keeping the White House, winning the Congress and making a clean sweep in 2000.

What he cannot judge, what no one can at the moment, is what will happen next. The personal consequences for the President have been enormous. If it is true that part of his deal with his wife was that his philandering would be at least discreet, then that bargain is over. Not only the details of what he did, but his thoughts on his marriage - that it was loveless, that he was out sure if it would survive the next two years - are now horribly public. His relationship with his daughter, Chelsea, is said to have suffered particularly badly.

But the riddles and the contradictions of impeachment, and its most deep scars, do not lie in the personality and biology of the President. They lie in the internal dynamics of Washington, in the southern states where white conservatives came to loathe him so much, and in the hearts and minds of people who believed they could topple a President, even when it was clear that that was not what the country wanted. We have been told so

often that the President's survival was puzzling that we have almost forgotten: this man was elected to office, twice, and probably would be again if he could stand again.

For two decades, America has been changing. Clinton represents this nation better than the Republicans, and that shows through again and again. You do not have to think he is a good man, or honest, or the best President: you just had to watch the Republicans yesterday, wondering what had hit them, and realising that it was Bill Clinton. A year ago he was written off as terminally wounded. He had to win; he did; and now he will seek to win again.

Matt Drudge (winner)
The internet gossip columnist demonstrated to the world that a combination of bravado flair and modern technology can run rings around the hide-bound journalism school graduates who comprise the cream of the American media.

Drudge whose trademark tributary was a more and more frequent sight on television talk shows as the year progressed, has been stunned by the mainstream as a risk-taking maverick, but he was more often vindicated than not.

Newt Gingrich (loser)
Having pledged to use every opportunity in the campaign for the mid-term Congressional elections to condemn Mr Clinton's behaviour with Ms Lewinsky, the House Speaker, 55, saw his party suffer a net loss in the House of Representatives and only maintain its representation in the Senate. Accepting responsibility for his party's failure, Mr Gingrich resigned from his position and the House, becoming the highest-ranking and least predicted victim of the Lewinsky affair.

Cheryl Mills (winner)
Thirty-three-year-old lawyer who became a star after her passionate presentation of Clinton's case in the Senate. A slim, earnest woman, she spoke slowly and deliberately of the sanctity of the "rule of law" and

While Ms Jones received \$850,000 (£530,000), much if not all of that will go on lawyers' fees and she did not even get the presidential apology she had stood out for.

Photo: AP

ional star

Art forger convicted of 'brilliant' fraud



Guilty: John Drewe (left) and John Myatt

A "CONSUMMATE and devious liar" was yesterday convicted of masterminding the biggest contemporary art fraud of the 20th century.

John Drewe, self-styled professor and nuclear physicist, plotted an international fraud that took in some of the art world's leading galleries and collectors. Among his victims were the Tate Gallery, Sotheby's, Christie's and the families of 20th century artists.

Drewe's activities were first revealed three years ago in an investigation by *The Independent*. Since then the paper has learned that Drewe had previously passed information about art fraud to the police and that he had contacts in the Mafia.

He was convicted yesterday after a five-month trial, of seven charges, including conspiracy to defraud. A co-defendant Daniel Stokes, was acquitted.

Southwark Crown Court was told that Drewe, 50, hired John Myatt, an unknown artist, and encouraged him to fake works in the style of Ben Nicholson, Marc Chagall and Alberto Giacometti. Myatt used a mixture of household emulsion, lubricating jelly and the contents of a vacuum cleaner to "age" the paintings. Drewe added authenticity by making frames from old wood and signing them with the artists' names.

Drewe's scheme relied on creating histories or provenances for these paintings, and over a period of months, he set about substantially altering and supplementing Britain's art archives to include details of his non-existent "works". At one

point, he even spent £20,000 to become a Fellow of the Tate Gallery, allowing him access to its vast records which he set about changing. He also faked catalogues from non-existent exhibitions which had displayed the paintings.

Although Drewe was charged in connection with just nine paintings, police believe that he and Myatt produced up to 200 works over a 10-year period which were sold in the US, Middle East and Europe.

While Myatt was paid just £250 a time, Drewe sold the paintings for up to £100,000. Police believe he may have profited by up to £2m.

Detective Sergeant Jonathan Searle of the Metropolitan Police's organised crime group, said yesterday: "This is quite simply the biggest contemporary art fraud the 20th century has ever seen. It was brilliantly carried out."

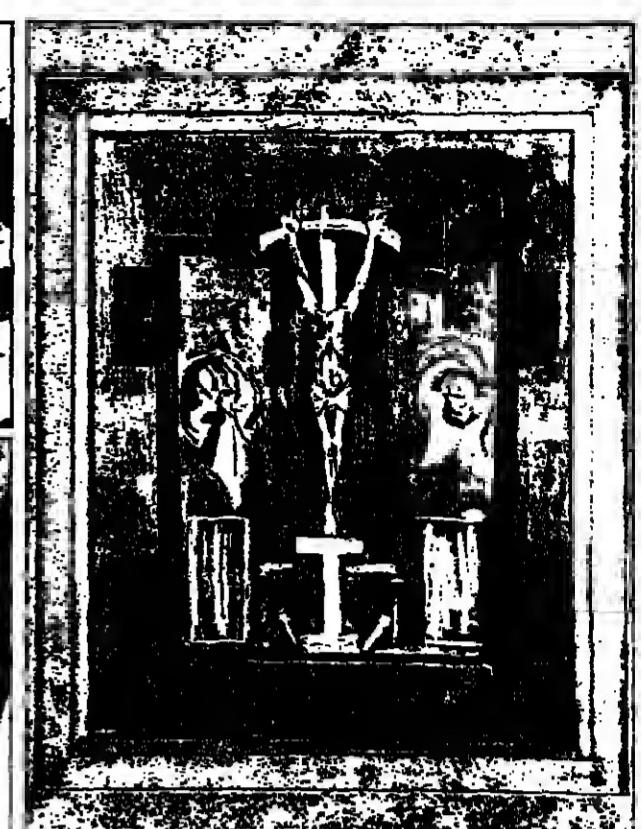
But the case has also highlighted a number of failings in the security of many of Britain's galleries and auction houses. Both the Tate and the Victoria and Albert Museum have since tightened their procedures.

One gallery owner said: "The trouble is that if the paintings are worth less than £100,000 no one bothers to check out their histories. They call themselves experts but they are just lazy."

Drewe, from Reigate, Surrey, and Myatt, 53, from Staffordshire, who had previously admitted his involvement, are to be sentenced on Monday.



Graham Sutherland's 'Somerset Mangham' (left) and 'Entrance to a Lane (below centre), and Ben Nicholson's 'Cortivallo, Lugano' (above centre). Their styles were copied by the forgery gang. Right: The forgers' version of 'Crucifixion' by Sutherland



Top galleries and collectors were duped

IT WAS HARD to say what was wrong, the way the paint had been applied or maybe the colours the artist had used. Whatever it was, the moment Leslie Waddington looked at the paintings he was unhappy.

The Dubuffet certainly looked the part but - well - Mr Waddington had not been an art dealer for as long as he had without learning a thing or two. And Jean Dubuffet had been a friend of his.

Within days Mr Waddington phoned a contact within the Art and Antiques squad of Scotland Yard to express his concerns about the paintings he had seen up for auction.

Unknown to Mr Waddington, his call in the summer of 1995 was to help crack one of the most ingenious art frauds of all time. It also led to the

downfall of John Drewe, a brilliant but flawed criminal who "took an intellectual delight in fooling people".

The practise of copying expensive works of art and passing them off as the real thing is probably as old as art itself. But by creating provenances for his fakes, Drewe entered a new realm.

His plan was brilliant and effective. "He came to me to authenticate certain things. In the early days I probably did," admitted Sir Alan Bowness, a senior member of the Henry Moore Foundation. "They all had very good provenances. That is what was so clever."

Sir Alan should not feel too bad. Drewe's scam took in galleries, collectors and even some of the families of the artists he was imitating. Devi-

ous to the point of genius, when one dealer complained that a De Stael painting he had bought was an imitation, Drewe promptly gave him four sketches by Graham Sutherland as compensation. These also turned out to be fakes. The dealer kept the De Stael as a £23,500 lesson.

Drewe was born John Cockett in Tonbridge, Kent, in February 1948, and grew up in Uckfield, Sussex, where the family lived in a farmhouse called Pleasant Farm. Little is known about his childhood but he left Bexleyheath Grammar School, aged 16, having gathered a handful of O-levels and took a job as a laboratory assistant with the Atomic Energy Authority. He left in 1967, having refused a request that he study for fur-

ther examinations. Drewe later to embellished his humble position in Walter Mitty fashion, telling people he was a nuclear physicist.

Police have no record of him from then until 1980, when he started working as a part-time teacher at Channing School in Highgate, London. He also taught at Des Pardes House, in Hampstead.

In the Spring of 1986 Drewe was reading *Private Eye* magazine when he came across an advert placed by an artist looking for commissions. It read: "Genuine Fakes. 19th and 20th Century painting done." Once Drewe met the artist - John Myatt - the pair formed an effective, but unequal, partnership.

When police caught up with the pair, Myatt turned Queen's

evidence. Cross-examined in court by Drewe - who led his own defence - Myatt said: "I was very much your creature. I found you hypnotising, charming, challenging."

Drewe charmed scores of people. Once, he recruited a neighbour Clive Bellman, to sell paintings. Knowing Mr Bellman was Jewish, Drewe told him he was selling the works to fund research to finally destroy the revisionist theory of the Holocaust.

Police inquiries were in their infancy when Mr Waddington called them, but Drewe was already known to them. Fourteen months earlier he had contacted the A&A squad offering information about the Mafia selling stolen paintings.

The officers met Drewe at the Battersea helipad, Lon-

don, where he arrived by helicopter. He gave police information on three paintings. When detectives checked, it transpired that two - a De Pisis and De Chirico - were stolen. Officers remain convinced that Drewe had genuine contacts within the Mafia.

Drewe's defence at the trial was that he was recruited to sell paintings to fund secret arms deals on behalf of a number of foreign governments, including South Africa's.

In creating false provenances for his paintings, Drewe altered - perhaps irretrievably - the archive material of many galleries. His actions have damaged records which help show whether paintings are genuine or like the ones he sold, simply fakes.

ANDREW BUNCOMBE

Just said yes.

Make yourself heard.

(On Valentine's Day.)



ERICSSON

GM food harmed rats, says research

A GROUP OF scientists warned of serious health dangers from eating genetically modified (GM) food yesterday, citing unpublished research allegedly showing that GM potatoes have damaged laboratory rats.

The independent scientists vigorously defended the work of Árpád Pusztai, an expert on plant toxins, who was forced to retire last year from his post at the Rowett Research Institute in Aberdeen after prematurely releasing the results of his experiments to the *World in Action* television programme.

Twenty researchers from around the world have signed a memorandum condemning the way Dr Pusztai was treated by the Rowett Institute, which said the 68-year-old scientist had become "muddled" over an experiment that did not in fact involve genetically modified potatoes.

Dr Pusztai was suspended and his annual contract not renewed. He has since been told not to talk publicly about his work on GM potatoes by his for-

mer employer.

But yesterday Vyvyan Howard, a toxicologist from Liverpool University, released data from further experiments carried out by Dr Pusztai which, said Dr Howard, supports the principal conclusion that genetically modified food can be harmful to health.

Dr Howard said that "transgenic" potatoes, which had an added gene responsible for a plant toxin called a lectin, produced damaging effects on the immune system and internal organs of the laboratory animals. "There is obviously something going on with this transgenic potato which is not just due to the lectins. We don't have an answer to that. It needs further research," he said.

Stanley Ewen, of the department of pathology at Aberdeen University, released preliminary results of his own experiments, which showed that animals fed on GM pota-



Leaflets handed to customers at the supermarket chain Iceland detailed the effects of genetically modified food

tatoes experienced the take-up of lectin proteins into the cells of their intestines. "It may be that in GM food a drug-delivery system has been created, delivering something you didn't want," Dr Ewen said.

Another supporter of Dr Pusztai, Professor Brian Goodwin, of Schumacher College in Dartington, Devon, said the latest results will strengthen support for an immediate moratorium on the growth of GM crops, a ban on patenting genes and an independent in-

quiry into the use of genetic engineering by the food and agricultural industries.

Ronald Finn, past president of the British Society of Allergy and Environmental Medicine, said Dr Pusztai's research

raised serious concerns. "Dr Pusztai's results to date at the very least raise the suspicion that genetically modified potatoes may damage the immune system."

If that happened, he said, the consequences of something like a flu epidemic could be extremely serious.

"You can imagine a doomsday scenario. If the immune system of the population was weakened, then the mortality would be increased many, many times."

Other scientists criticised Dr Pusztai's supporters for taking his research out of context. Professor Ray Baker, chief executive of the Biotechnology and Biological Research Council, said the potato experiments did not cast doubt on the safety of all GM food. "These potatoes were part of an experiment

and were never intended for commercial production, nor are they available on the market," he said.

As the row over Dr Pusztai erupted, Tony Blair yesterday rejected calls for a moratorium on GM food and played down mounting concern. "There is no GM food that can be sold in this country without going through a very long regulatory process," he said on BBC radio. "Let's proceed on the basis of genuine scientific analysis and inquiry, proceed with very great care

and caution and not get the facts mixed up."

Philip James, director of the Rowett Institute, vigorously defended his decision to suspend Dr Pusztai on the grounds that the lectin expert had become confused over key experiments on GM potatoes.

Dr James said that Dr Pusztai had claimed in media interviews to have found ill-effects on rats fed with GM potatoes with a lectin called GNA - a protein derived from the snowdrop plant - but in fact

Mark Chilvers

he had mistaken these results for those on ordinary potatoes that had been deliberately laced with high concentrations of another, highly toxic lectin called Con A, which would never be used in human food.

Dr James strongly denied that he had come under any political pressure to dismiss Dr Pusztai.

The environmental pressure group Friends of the Earth called on the Prime Minister yesterday to hold an inquiry into the affair.

Committee 'biased towards bio-firms'

BY ANDREW MULLINS AND FRAN ABRAMS

something or other than I suspect the Government is going to listen to them. Wouldn't you?" she asked.

She was backed by other experts. Julie Sheppard, of the Consumers' Association, was nominated by three organisations for a place on the committee but was rejected. There have been rumours that she was ruled out because of her sceptical views on the subject.

Kate Verables, a senior lecturer at the National Heart and Lung Foundation, who was appointed to the committee in May last year, said its remit was too narrow for it to address public concerns. "Scientists who are desperately excited by the idea of genetic modification are not going to be deflected from this as an interesting and exciting research tool.

"I would not dream of accu-

ring anybody of acting for improper reasons because of links with commercial interests. I don't think that happens. But I do think it happens in a more subtle way. You are hardly likely to question the fundamental assumptions about its safety if it would mean questioning your whole career," she said.

"If companies have put millions of pounds into research or

mounting from biotechnology firms including the American corporation Monsanto, the Downing Street policy unit is now arguing that the spread of the foods in Britain is inevitable.

The view of Liz Lloyd, who has responsibility for the subject in the unit and who met Monsanto representatives last year, was apparent when Tony Blair ruled out a moratorium on the crops at Prime Minister's Questions on Wednesday.

The only minister who has continued to argue for a moratorium, Michael Meacher, looks increasingly isolated on the subject.

The pressure for full-scale production of the crops is not just coming from companies within Britain, though. As reported in *The Independent* on Sunday last year, President Bill Clinton phoned Mr Blair to argue that Britain should accept genetically modified food.

WHO SELLS WHAT

SAFEWAY
Confirmed own-brand tomato puree contains GM tomatoes but refused to give any other details

Noodle, Vesta Beef Risotto, Batchelor's Beanfeast, Godzilla pizza-filled skinless sausages, some flavours of Walkers crisps, some flavours of Smith's crisps, Frazzles, Bacon Fries

MARKS & SPENCER
Could not provide a list of GM products but said all own-brand foods with GM ingredients are labelled

ICELAND STORES
Guarantees that all own-brand foods produced after 1 May are GM-free

TESCO
Provided a comprehensive list of own-brand foods with GM ingredients, including Value soups and sausages, pies, fresh sauces

KwikSave
KwikSave No Frills bread and cheese products

SAINSBURY'S
Own-brand tomato puree

HOUSEHOLD NAMES
Among products containing GM ingredients are: Pot

contains GM tomatoes. The store is currently labelling all own-label GM or GM derivative products. Examples are vegetarian bolognese sauce, soya mince, soya chunks, vegetarian moussaka

PROCESSED FOOD
About 60 per cent of processed foods, such as pasta, pizza, baby foods, baby milk, contain GM soya. GM maize from the US may be present in soups, sauces, ready meals, curries, snacks and chewing gum. Soya derivatives, such as soya oil and lecithin, may be present in thousands of processed foods. No obligation to label

Two more shows accused of using bogus guests

BY PAUL MCCANN
Media Editor

THE SCANDAL of hoaxers on so-called "confessional TV" chat shows widened yesterday after claims were made against two more shows.

It was claimed that the "boyfriend" of one guest on ITV's *Trisha* – presented by Trisha Goddard – was an actor she had met only the night before. Sharon Tufers said that she and the actor, Anthony Noel, met at a railway station before travelling to the show's studios in Norwich.

Another guest, Eddie Wheeler, said he had appeared on the show with a woman posing as a "former girlfriend".

Mr Wheeler also claimed to have fooled *The Vanessa Show* and the now defunct *ITV pro-*

would be held "liable for any consequences if they are telling lies". The company also made *The Time, The Place* before it was scrapped.

The fresh allegations, made in *The Mirror*, came only a day after three members of the team behind BBC1's *The Vanessa Show* were suspended after allegations that "guests" were in fact recruited from agencies.

The daytime chatshow format came under attack from the broadcasting minister Janet Anderson, who said there should be a question mark over the future of such programmes.

Jocelyn Hay, chairman of the Voice of the Listener and Viewer, said: "This undermines the whole integrity of the programmes, and makes a farce of them."

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Trisha Goddard: The host who was 'duped'

Oscar nominee plays squeeze-box in pub

THERE ARE at least three reasons to admire the musician Stephen Warbeck apart from his musicianship.

One, he lives close to the Arsenal ground in north London and has no interest in football – doesn't even pretend to be interested (jokes about his proximity to Arsenal b-o-r-i-g and so on, as the particular explanation for this unfashionable ignorance would simply pass him by).

Two, he can play the accordion for pass-the-parcel at children's parties for an hour or so and always manage to avoid "The Happy Wanderer".

Three, he drives around his partner and three young children in a VW camper of such age and interior confusion that it might still be on the run to Kathmandu.

(A fourth reason for admiration) he pilots a tandem.

On Tuesday he was nominated for an Oscar. You probably won't have read about this. Every newspaper reported that *Shakespeare in Love* had 13 nominations, and then lost interest in the list after Gwyneth Paltrow. (As rivers of information, newspapers are drying up – the idea that people without access to the Internet will constitute an information underclass is beginning to be true). In fact, I wouldn't have known either about his nomination in the "original musical and comedy score" category had we not been neighbours who dropped off children at the same school.

On Monday morning as we chatted on the pavement, I said how much we'd enjoyed *Shakespeare in Love* the previous night; "enjoyable" is the word that tends to be used about the film, as if being less enjoyable would make it finer and wortier.

Warbeck said he didn't think his music stood much chance of a nomination in the Academy Awards. The idea that it might had never occurred to me. Warbeck is such a wry and modest man and the Oscars, however absurd, seem to exist on a higher plane than the natural world; playtime for the Gods. The thought that they could reach down from their stretch limos in Hollywood and touch Warbeck on his tandem in Highbury was thrilling. If he was nominated – if he won! – our street, his street, the laundrette and takeaways in be-

NOTEBOOK



IAN JACK

tween – all these would be suddenly blessed and their spirits kindled; a little touch of Harry in the night.

When I went round to see him on Wednesday evening, squeezing past the tandem in the hall, he looked, as usual, impressively domestic. His clarinet-playing partner Sarah, was out at a jazz gig. He had a sleeping baby, Matilda, on his knee and a book of poems by Pablo Neruda on the table. His living room is unlikely to feature in *Hello!* magazine. Too much evidence of living, jumbling happily across floors, shelves, chests, in fact over every flat surface, vertical and horizontal, apart from the ceiling. People in Beverly Hills might think of it as "Dickensian ethnic".

Some facts about Warbeck. He's 45, has been playing instruments since the age of four, started a rock group at school with his friend Andrew Ranken (who later joined the Pogues), and then, after university, began a theatre career at Stratford East which as it went on became uncertainly divided between acting and music.

On stage, he was Guildenstern in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* and Thérèse Raquin's husband in *Thérèse Raquin*. Off stage, he was the man at the piano, composing incidental themes and tunes.

Eventually his agent put it to him that he had to decide which he was, actor or musician, and he chose the latter. His big break came with the music for the *Prime Suspect* television series (directed by John Madden, the director of *Shakespeare in Love*, and a fellow nominee). Since then he's worked with Stephen Daldry at the Royal Court (*An Inspector Calls*) and scored the film *Mrs Brown*. He is also head of music at the Royal Shakespeare Company.

But all this is in a sense his private life. I had never



Stephen Warbeck, whose original score for 'Shakespeare in Love' has been nominated for an Oscar, at his home in Highbury Pete Millson

glimpsed it before. Publicly, he's the composer-accordionist in a nine-piece band called the Kippers that plays at folk festivals in the summer and London pubs for the rest of the year. Paul Bradley, who was Nigel in *EastEnders*, does the vocals. Andrew Ranken, the ex-Pogue, is on drums. Warbeck said that the name is actually the Kippers, though he is silent.

This hint of harmless late 80s surrealism provides some idea of the music, which is difficult to describe. It would be believable as 1920s dance-band stuff from Valparaiso, or as folk tunes from Baku. Warbeck said he owed a little to Kurt Weil, to klezmer, which is fast Jewish music on the clarinet, and to the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band. It was, he said, "light-hearted European, world silly music".

In the Oscars, he has stiff competition from Randy Newman (*A Bug's Life*) and Stephen Schwartz (*The Prince of Egypt*). As this is Schwartz's fifth nomination – he did *The Lion King*, *Pocahontas*, and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* – the obvious money is on

him. Of course, I hope Warbeck wins. He is looking forward so much to the clothes; and to the double who, when you zip out to the loo, takes your seat in the auditorium so that it never looks less than full. I hope he makes a speech about his mum and dad and the folks back home in Highbury.

Will it change him? You have to doubt it. Twelve years of Margaret Thatcher clearly had no success in that direction. In the meantime, Londoners can catch him and the Kippers at their next gig: the Weavers Arms, Newington Green Road, on 24 February. He's the one on the squeeze-box, not playing "The Happy Wanderer".

called millennium bug (more properly, the millennium flaw), when many computers are expected to malfunction because they won't be able to read the date correctly. They may think – if I've got this right – that things still to happen have already happened or, when they have happened, not happened.

Opinion polls show that 10 per cent of Americans expect to withdraw most or all of their money from banks, while 17 per cent expect to buy either a generator or a wood-burning stove. Sales of survival rations are expected to boom. The

American Red Cross recommends: "Stock disaster supplies to last several days to a week; non-perishable foods, stored water, and an ample supply of medications ... be prepared to relocate to a shelter for warmth ... have plenty of flashlights to hand."

This seemed to me mockably dire and fearful. Then I came across a booklet called the "Y2K Citizen's Action Guide" which is published by the *Utne Reader*, a magazine that could certainly be said to be on the alternative side of American life but is still an intelligent distance

from the bowie-knife, catch-all-eat-thinking of American survivalism. The guide is larded with so many quotes from so many seemingly distinguished figures that I began to look at my cellar in a new light.

"Failure to achieve compliance will jeopardise our way of life on this planet for some time to come" (Arthur Gross, chief information officer, the Inland Revenue Service).

"I cannot be optimistic, and I am generally concerned about the possibility of power shortages" (Senator Robert Bennett, chairman of the Senate's

special committee on Y2K. "Now the only hope is keeping the world economy from total deterioration" (Jeffrey Garten, Dean, Yale School of Management).

"It's far too late, and things are far too bad, for pessimism" (Dee Hock, founder Visa International).

More than 100 pages of advice follow; most of it detailed. Allow 20lb of brown rice or whole wheat per person per month, 15 grams of Vitamin C similarly; keep crackers crisp in metal containers. "Always prepare for the worst and hope for the best" is the overall philosophy and the tone is strangely joyful.

The coming crisis, the guide implies, may bring out the best in Americans. They will rediscover old virtues: neighbourliness, the civic spirit. It could do for Philadelphia what the Blitz did for Stepney.

But perhaps one shouldn't be too sceptical. Peter de Jager, a technology consultant, is the writer widely credited with alerting the world to the problem when he published his essay, "Doomsday 2000", in a computer trade magazine more than five years ago.

In the current debate, he's not seen as an alarmist. In last month's *Scientific American*, he wrote in a balanced and admirably clear piece that he believed that severe disruptions would occur and last for about a month.

"This prediction might be optimistic; it assumes that people will have done what is necessary to minimise the number of single points of failure that could occur. Accomplishing that alone in the time remaining will require a Herculean effort unprecedented in the history of computers."

A few extra tins of baked beans then, not forgetting the Vitamin C.

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"...a treat"

IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

'My trade is trivia. This week's top offerings are as follows: it is against the law in the United States to make a pastry reproduction of the White House; a giraffe can use its tongue to wash its ears; red-headed women almost never become bald.'

Top trivia offerings from Captain Moonlight

THE BEST-WRITTEN SUNDAY PAPER IN BRITAIN, FEATURING DAVID THOMSON, JEREMY CLARKE, PETER YORK, CHRIS PATTEN, NATASHA WALTER, JOAN SMITH, GILBERT ADAIR, MICHAEL BYWATER, DEAR ANNIE, ALAN WATKINS AND WALLACE ARNOLD

Kosovo peace talks close to collapse

THE KOSOVO peace conference was close to collapsing last night as the Serbs insisted they would not negotiate unless ethnic Albanian Kosovars signed a contested declaration.

Madeleine Albright, US Secretary of State, announced an emergency mission to Paris today. Her presence in France means there will be a full-scale ministerial meeting of the six world powers in the Contact Group to decide whether to go ahead with a second week of

BY RUPERT CORNWELL

talks. Importantly, Mrs Albright will also deliver a blunt message to the Serbs that unless they relent, they face the certainty of Nato bombing.

At a press conference in Paris yesterday, the Serbian President, Milan Milutinovic, an ally of the Yugoslav President, Slobodan Milosevic, could not have been more blunt: "If they sign, we will continue the negotiations. If not, no negotiations. We cannot start building

a house from the roof and then realise it will fall down." He accused the West of impeding the talks, and of bias towards the Albanian position. But there would be no walkout. "Why should we leave? We are sitting, we are waiting. We accept the Contact Group principles."

His words amounted to a direct challenge to Robin Cook, Britain's Foreign Secretary, who placed the blame for the deadlock squarely on the Serb side, accusing Belgrade of "time wasting" by insisting the Albanians sign up to principles which, he said, both sides had in practice already agreed to by even attending the conference.

The Serbs are desperately keen on formal ratification of the document because it foresees Kosovo remaining part of the existing Yugoslavia, albeit with vastly increased autonomy, including its own police force, elected assembly and president. That, however, is

precisely why the Albanians will not sign it. Yesterday, a key aide of Ibrahim Rugova, their political leader, insisted there had to be a specific provision for a referendum.

With both sides trading

blame for the stalemate, omens for success in Rambouillet are looking bleak. Nor are matters helped by latent divisions within the Contact Group - comprising France, Britain, Italy, Germany, the US and Russia - which could explode into the

open if the conference does break down.

While Washington is adamant there must be air strikes against Belgrade if its obduracy blocks any deal, the Russians are equally adamantly opposed. Hubert Vedrine, the French Foreign Minister, has also expressed his country's misgivings about any unilateral use of force by Nato.

The stand-off over principles has meant that the mediators at Rambouillet, led by the US

diplomat Christopher Hill, have hardly embarked on detailed bargaining over Kosovo's autonomy. During her meetings with the two sides, Mrs Albright will also spell out to Serbs and Albanians the key elements to the proposed accord, calling for a drastic reduction in Yugoslav troop strength in Kosovo. This will reportedly fall from about 14,000 today to only 1,500, with the sole task of guarding the province's external borders.



Some of the tanks that are off to Kosovo Sgt B Gamble



An army at home on the range

BY JOHN DAVISON
Defence Correspondent

THE EBULLIENT, moustachioed sergeant was looking for volunteers. "Come on lads, I still need some bodies for the boat crew. Don't any of you want a nice trip?" he said, brandishing his clipboard.

In the sub-zero temperatures, most of the soldiers taking a break in the "brew" tent seemed more interested in huddling round the warm tea urn as the heavy guns boomed outside. The fact that the sergeant was asking for men to accompany the regiment's tanks on a possible sea-trip to Kosovo showed just how far the plans for deployment had already gone. This was the scene earlier this week as The King's Royal Hussars (KRH), were going through live firing training on the Holme range in northern Germany, in expect-

ation of a sudden departure.

After an announcement by George Robertson, the Secretary of State for Defence, on Thursday the tanks of KRH and the "heavy metal" equipment of the other lead units in the army's 4 Brigade will embark for the troubled Serbian province on Monday.

The decision will ensure that their Challenger tanks, Warrior armoured fighting vehicles, and AS90 155mm guns are in the area when peace talks come to an end next week. A total of 8,000 British troops will be deployed only if a deal is agreed. The move is also being seen as a way of applying extra pressure for a settlement between the Serb and Kosovo-

negotiations at the talks near Paris.

Those negotiators should have been at the range last week when the Challengers started to fire. Hearing, seeing and feeling the power from their 120mm guns is an experience to concentrate even the most wayward minds.

The commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Jonathan Powe, was exuding a quiet confidence about the possible job that lies ahead. "We saw it coming, and had been thinking about it amongst ourselves for a while," he said. "The boys are pretty excited about it. They see

it as an important task and are confident in their ability [to do] whatever is asked of them."

Even to get to the training ranges, however, had taken a huge effort. The regiment, and other elements of the British lead battle group, which will spearhead the planned Nato deployment of up to 30,000 troops, had received orders to get ready only six days before.

The latest Mark III tanks had to be scrounged from other KRH squadrons to make sure that those which are going were the best available. Extra spares had to be ordered up,

while work on the tanks, which

spend most of their time idle in hangars, went on day and night throughout last weekend.

Some of the problems give a good indication of how the Army is already struggling to meet its many commitments. The range time had to be "borrowed" from the German army, as cost constraints mean tanks usually fire live ammunition only once a year. Training that would normally take eight days has been crammed into two.

Most startling is the fact that of the 12 tank crews in A Squadron, which will be the first to go, half of the gunners will

have never fired a real gun

before. Recruitment problems and a high turnover of soldiers to fill other jobs meant that the new boys had previously trained only on simulators.

Staff Sergeant Mark Orr, as

regimental gunnery sergeant, is the man directly responsible for making sure all the gunners can shoot straight. He conceded that the situation was far from ideal. "In the old days this certainly wasn't normal, but it is becoming normal now," he said, adding that the experience of the tank commanders would make up for any minor shortcomings. He has 21 years' experience in tanks, including

service in the Gulf War. Sgt Orr

said that finally getting the order to move had been a relief for the men, even though it meant working hard to catch up, and that the mood as a whole was "pretty good".

"Sure, spending six to eight

months on a mountainside

freezing your nuts off isn't anybody's idea of fun, and the separation from families will be painful," he said. "But most realise that this is a real job that has to be done, that is what they joined the Army for and that is what we get paid for. This is where the taxpayer gets his money back."

Back on the range, Major Richard Hannay, the A Squadron leader, watched as three guns went off in rapid succession and tracer lights from the training shells streaked towards the shared, moving target. In the middle distance dark earth spewed up against the snow, recording the hits or near misses.

Major Hannay said he was pleased at the way things were going but, talking about the probable role in Kosovo, he added: "I hope we won't be doing anything like this. If we are then something will have gone terribly wrong."

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IN BRIEF

Kray jail appeal rejected

CHARLIE KRAY, elder brother of the gangster twins Ronnie and Reggie, had his 12-year jail sentence for masterminding a £35m cocaine deal upheld by the Court of Appeal yesterday. Kray, 72, of Sanderson, south-east London, was sentenced in June 1997 after being found guilty of supplying and offering to supply the drug.

Honeymoon air rage groom jailed

A NEWLYWED man who attacked crew on a flight to Gatwick from his honeymoon in Florida was jailed for 12 months yesterday by Chichester Crown Court. Gurup Singh, 23, from Sutton Coldfield, had to be tied down on the 1997 flight after his wife said she was leaving him for another man. He admitted endangering aircraft safety.

Substance abuse killed Lord Bristol

ORGAN FAILURE from long-term use of drugs and alcohol caused the death of the Marquess of Bristol, a coroner ruled yesterday. Lord Bristol, a registered drug addict who had served two jail terms for possession of drugs, died on 10 January at the age of 44.

Keep that aspidistra talking

MORE THAN seven million Britons talk to their plants, according to the results of a poll conducted for Baby Bio plant food. Sixteen per cent of respondents said they hummed, sang or talked to their houseplants.

Acas fails to stop Tube strike

HOPES THAT next week's 48-hour strike on the London Underground might be called off were dashed yesterday when the conciliation service Acas said it could not find common ground between management and the RMT union.

Moderate miners vote for strike

MEMBERS OF the moderate Union of Democratic Mineworkers have voted to take their first strike, at RJB Mining, over pay, the union announced yesterday.

Match-fixing: three in court

BY ANDREW WOODCOCK

THREE MEN appeared in court yesterday charged with conspiracy and criminal damage in connection with an alleged attempt to fix a Premiership football match by sabotaging the floodlights.

Choo Kew Ong, 49, a manager from Paddington, west London; Wai Yuen Liu, 37, a car salesman from Kensington, west London; and Eng Hwa Lim, 35, an electronic engineer, also from Paddington, were all remanded in custody until 19 February at Horseferry Road magistrates' court.

The men were arrested by

by deception to deny persons the opportunity to win money by betting in that you were able to determine the outcome of a match.

The second charge alleged that the three men "had electrical devices and other various electrical items intending, without lawful excuse to use the same or to cause or permit another to use the same to destroy or damage the electrical supply, concourse and safety lighting belonging to Charlton Athletic Football Club in a way which you knew was likely to endanger human life".

Thumbsucking for dummies

BY JEREMY LAURANCE
Health Editor

Dummies promote a greater flow of saliva than thumbs or fingers, which helps to prevent tooth decay (provided they are not dipped in juice or honey), and are less likely to cause deformity because children tend to give up dummies sooner before the development of the adult teeth. Thumb-sucking

babies but declines rapidly with age and is rare over the age of three. Thumbo or finger-sucking is less common in babies but more common after 18 months and more persistent than dummy-sucking. Four out of ten thumb-suckers still do it at the age of nine.

Writing in today's edition of the British Dental Journal, Dr Levine says 95 per cent of children indulge in what scientists call non-nutritive sucking.



Hall and Stoppard unveil rival to Arts Council



Sir Peter Hall (left) with his lifetime achievement award and Trevor Nunn, the director Andrew Buurman

SOME OF Britain's best-known theatrical figures have set up a rival arts council to monitor and draw attention to the Government's treatment of the arts.

Sir Peter Hall revealed the existence of the body yesterday at the Laurence Olivier Awards, where he was receiving a special award for his life-time contribution to theatre.

He said he would be chairing the council, which was set up this week. The playwrights Sir Tom Stoppard and Harold Pinter will be on it, as will Sir Harrison Birtwistle, the composer. Sir Peter said the body would feed the press with information and would be a place for arts lovers among the public to make known their dissatisfaction with the Government and the funding bodies.

The awards are one of the high points of the theatrical calendar and yesterday's ceremony at the National's Olivier Theatre in London was attended by the Hollywood star Kevin Spacey, who won the Best Actor Award for his role in *The Iceman Cometh*. The

play also won Best Director for Howard Davies.

But Sir Peter stole the show with a stinging attack on the Government, much to the discomfort of Chris Smith, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, who sat unsmiling in the audience.

Sir Peter said: "There is a passionate group of people who are worried about the state of the arts. They are artists and they are saying what has happened to the Arts Council?" At the moment the Government announces new money but at the other end it is not there. That means the new money has been spent on management consultants and feasibility studies. I still don't think the Government understands the importance of the arts.

"We are desperately apathetic and stupid about our greatest resources, and one of them is the arts."

Sir Peter has had his request to the Arts Council



Spacey: 'Overwhelmed' at being best actor

Council that is in the process of halving the number of staff. So it cannot be called over-bureaucratized."

The Best Actress went to Eileen Atkins for her performance in *The Unexpected Man*. The National Theatre's production of *Oklahoma!* picked up four awards - Best Musical, Best Supporting Performance in a Musical for Shuler Hensley; Best Choreographer for Susan Stroman and Best Set Designer for Anthony Ward.

Best New Comedy was Terry Johnson's *Clo, Camping, Emmanuelle and Dick*. Brendan Coyle won Best Supporting Performance for *The Weir* and Sophie Thompson was Best Actress in a Musical for *Into the Woods*. *Kat and the Kings* was Best New Musical.

Kevin Spacey said he was overwhelmed to receive his award from Lady Olivier, the actress Joan Plowright. Lady Olivier sparked laughter when, referring to her late husband, she said: "If I can put a new spin on an old phrase, I'm as happy as Larry to be here."

£20 note changes to beat forgers

BY JASON BENNETTO
Crime Correspondent

an illustration of Worcester Cathedral, the city where the composer was born. The new note is expected to replace the old one completely by the end of 2002. The police have carried out a series of operations against major counterfeiting gangs in the past year. One of the top-level outfits is due to be sentenced on Monday.

In a joint operation by the National Crime Squad and the National Criminal Intelligence Service, five men were caught running an illegal money printing factory in Kent.

The extent of the counterfeiting problem was illustrated by a recent police operation against a gang of forgers who were caught preparing to print high-quality £20 notes with a face value of more than £2m on an industrial estate in Kent. The counterfeitors, who are understood to have been bankrolled by the notorious London criminal outfit, the Adams family, had successfully carried out a test run and distributed £100,000 of notes throughout the country. Detectives say that the £20 note is most frequently forged because the smaller denominations are not worth enough, while the £50 note attracts too much scrutiny. Forgers can use computer technology and advanced printing techniques to produce increasingly good copies of banknotes. Of the 1.361 million notes printed last year, 349 million were £20. They now make up nearly half of the £24bn of notes in circulation. The Bank of England estimates that the total value of forged notes is less than £240m. Police seized £6.1m of counterfeit notes last year.

The new £20 will be the most counterfeited note the Bank has produced. The face of Elgar will be on the back, alongside

Leading article,
Review, page 3

Woman 'slave' wins £78,000 damages

A YOUNG woman who fell three floors trying to escape from a London flat where she was kept as a domestic slave by a wealthy Kuwaiti family has been awarded £77,998 damages.

Mr Justice Morland, at the High Court in London on Thursday, said Suniretha Jayasekera, 25, was treated in a "humiliating and quite disgraceful manner" by Jaafar and Khaleed al-Sayegh. "I've heard a story which would seem almost incredible to have occurred in London in the Nineties... She

was treated as a domestic slave," he said.

Mrs Jayasekera's dawn escape in 1991 from a ninth-floor flat came after 37 days of working without time off, any pay, or a chance to go out. She was fed on leftovers, made to sleep on the floor, repeatedly kicked and threatened with hanging.

Mrs Jayasekera, who came from Sri Lanka for a supervisor's job with Mr Sayegh, severely damaged her ankle in the fall. She also suffers post-traumatic stress disorder.

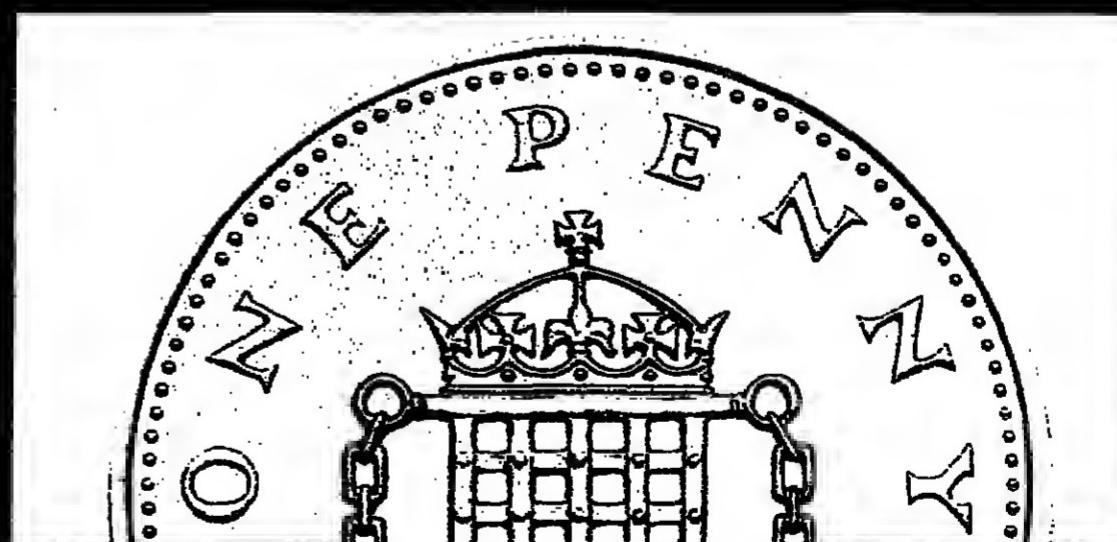
SUE ARNOLD



Even the sheep turned nasty, demanding free champagne

IN THE WEEKEND REVIEW PAGE 5

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THE INDEPENDENT
Saturday 13 February 1999



Nick Ryman, Hugh's father, and Château Jaubertie, which is for sale. *Patrick Eagar*

Ryman, king of wine, goes bottoms up

THE GOLDEN boy of Britain's wine industry is being forced to sell the £2m château where he grew up to fend off a growing list of creditors who are threatening the future of his business.

Hugh Ryman, the son of the stationery chain millionaire Nick Ryman, is widely acknowledged as having transformed wine-making worldwide with a team of young Australian winemakers using the latest technological expertise in vineyards from France to South Africa. But the man who supplies more than two million bottles a year to British supermarkets and off-licences admitted yesterday that financial mismanagement has left him with serious debts.

He must sell Château Jaubertie in the Bergerac area of south-west France, to pay creditors. He said he had a buyer and a sale could be completed within weeks, although

BY LOUISE JURY AND
MARTIN ISACK

the château has already been

1996, while both his former public relations company, R & R Teamwork, and transport company, Torchrise, parted company from him amid financial wrangles.

Some bond-holders who invested in Château Jaubertie when Nick Ryman began the family's winery in the early Seventies now fear they will never see their stake money again.

Sue Whitley, a publisher and bond-holder since she invested £1,500 15 years ago, said: "One gets increasingly nervous that one isn't going to get one's stake money back."

Neither have the bond-holders, who number more than 300, yet received their annual consignment of wine each was promised in return for their investment. The 1998 wine was due to arrive next Monday but will now not be available until March. Last year's con-

signment was impounded by

Customs and Excise in a dispute over duty and bond-holders only received their cases if they paid to have the wine released. Mrs Whitley said that over the years she had received her money's worth in wine. But more recent bond-holders, encouraged to join by early enthusiasts like herself, had paid a bigger stake and still not received their supplies.

Winemakers, too, have suffered. Josephine Horn, 25, worked for Mr Ryman in France for three months two years ago. After continual problems over pay, she took Mr Ryman to court in Bordeaux

last October and won judg-

ment against him. She said

this week, from her new job in Australia that she had not re-

ceived the outstanding money

— more than £3,000 — and she

owed significant sums to

lawyers in fees.

Another winemaker, Paul Dunnewy, claims he is owed

two and a half months' wages

and his travel expenses for

working in Moldova in 1996, a

sum of about £5,000.

"Under no circumstances

would I work for Hugh Ryman

again, nor would I recommend

the experience to other wine-

makers," he said.

Representatives of First

Quench, the company that



Hugh Ryman is selling his £2m château to pay off a catalogue of debts

Cepicas

owns wine shops including Threshers, Victoria Wine and Bottoms Up, have also held talks with Mr Ryman.

The problems are understood to have increasingly alarmed Nick Ryman, who resigned from the Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers after months of delays in settling the bill for a wine-tasting hosted by his son in the livery company hall in June 1996.

Hugh Ryman, 37, said yesterday: "We do have debts," but denied owing all the money claimed. There had been poor financial administration in the

past, but he had cut overheads by £450,000 a year and the company was now in better shape.

Asked whether he would go bankrupt, he said it depended whether a campaign against him meant he did no business. "It can always happen," he said. But he was confident the château could be sold because he intended changing the bond-holders into shareholders, which made it more attractive to potential buyers. He said the sale of the château would generate enough revenue — about a third of the sale price — to pay off the debtors who were causing the problems.

Spain, and at Marques at Riscal in Rueda, he used his expertise with Sauvignon Blanc to good effect.

"Possibly the best wine I have ever made," he says of the 1995 Jacana Pinotage Reserve produced in South Africa, which won a trophy and gold medal at the 1997 International Wine Challenge.

ANTHONY ROSE

STAR OF 'THE FLYING WINEMAKERS'

SILHOUETTED AGAINST a dark background with a wine glass to his nose, Hugh Ryman features in the *Oxford Wine Companion* as "one of the more celebrated flying winemakers".

Tall, charming, on the face of it the perfect English gentleman, Ryman has always stood out from the crowd of mostly Australians.

and New Zealanders who descend on Europe's vineyards to make wine at harvest time.

With a nose for sniffing out under-achieving regions and using the technical skills of antipodean winemakers, Ryman has built a worldwide winemaking business based,

on good value wines tailor-made to supermarkets and off-licences.

I first came across him

breezing into Moldova in 1991, where he signed up

the Hinest winery as a partner producing cheap but not particularly cheerful reds and whites for the British

market. At that time, he was

already starting to make a

name for himself with a palatable if unpronounceable £3.49 Hungarian Chardonnay from Gyongyos.

Despite the flying

winemaker tag, Ryman is

grounded for much of the

time. In 1990 he bought

land at Cave du Casse, near

Carcassonne, in the south of

France and turned the shed

into a modern winery

complete with glistening

stainless steel tank farm and

new oak barrels.

"The Dump" as it was

affectionately known, turns

out crisply refreshing

Sauvignon Blanc and

Chardonnay as well as an

attractive Cabernet

Sauvignon. Ryman has made

no secret of the fact that, to

keep the price down, the

Chardonnay was fermented

using oak chips, a classic

Australian technique

frowned upon by the French.

He set up projects in

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Cooked

Treasures looted by Nazis returned to Rothschilds



Cézanne's 'The Bathers' was probably stolen from a Jew by Nazi collaborators in France Bridgeman Art Library

THE AUSTRIAN government has announced that 250 art objects stolen by the Nazis from the Rothschild family will be returned.

By ADAM LEBOR
in Budapest

works are being returned. It is a wonderful feeling."

The plundering of the Rothschild palace in Vienna was recorded by the American correspondent William Shirer, who lived next door, in his book *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*: "I myself, from our apartment in Flossgasse, watched squads of SS men carting off silver, tapestries, paintings and other loot from the palace," he said.

The Rothschild works include 31 paintings, three by the Dutch master Frans Hals, as well as antique musical instruments and weapons, carpets, globes and navigation instruments. They belonged to Alphonse and Clarice Rothschild and Louis Rothschild, who were allowed to flee Nazi-occupied Austria on condition that they left their art behind.

The Hals paintings, including *Portrait of Telemann Roosterman*, are among 22 pieces owned by the Rothschilds in the Austrian Art History Museum.

Bettina Loorain-Rothschild, daughter of Alphonse and Clarice, said: "I still cannot grasp that after 50 years the

nexed by Germany in 1938 has for decades proclaimed itself the first victim of the Nazis, although the arrival of German forces in Vienna was welcomed by thousands of cheering onlookers.

"Today's decision is an important part of the Republic's new self-image. We show a bit of justice with these restitutions. With it, Austria signals its coming to terms with its history," said the Culture Minister, Elisabeth Gehrer.

It was only last year, after controversy over Switzerland's economic collaboration with the Third Reich, that Austria passed a law that created a legal basis for returning looted art.

The Nazis looted some 15,000 works of art from France, which were returned after the war. About 13,000 were auctioned off. The rest were placed in museums across the world.

The decision to return part of the Rothschild collection shows that Austria, like Switzerland, is facing up to its ambiguous role in regard to Nazi Germany. Austria, an

The French government has placed an inventory of those 2,000 artworks on the Internet. Elan Steinberg of the World Jewish Congress, said that a recently published interim report of the official Matzevi commission, which is investigating the issue, showed the location of some of the 2,000 pieces.

Steinberg said two Louis XIV chairs and other pieces, including oriental rugs, were in the Prime Minister's residence, and a leather-covered medallion box was in the Elysee presidential palace.

The artworks listed on the Internet include 18 paintings by Renoir, 12 by Monet, 9 by Degas, 1 by Picasso and 1 by Rembrandt.

The Bathers, by Cezanne, was probably stolen from a Jewish collector by Nazi collaborators, Steinberg said.

During the war many French art dealers made handsome profits from buying art collections on the cheap from Jews desperate to flee, before selling them on to the Nazis.

US plans to host Ethiopia peace bid

BOTH ETHIOPIA and Eritrea continue to reject calls by the UN Security Council for an immediate cessation of hostilities, although there has been a significant halt in heavy fighting for the past few days. On Friday the Ethiopian government asked its people to celebrate military victories on the front line, claiming to have pushed back Eritrean forces. But Eritrea has similarly claimed initial victory, widely publishing pictures from its defensive positions in the trenches.

A lull in the fighting has created space for a renewed diplomatic effort, with the US reportedly planning to send representatives from Washington next week. The battle of words remains intense. Eritrea accused Ethiopia yesterday of killing a dozen civilians in shelling on villages near the disputed town of Zalambessa, a centre of fighting in their new border war. Ethiopia said it was gaining ground and would not stop fighting until it regained the contested territory.

Both sides claim the other is responsible for starting the conflict, although Ethiopia recently accepted it broke the air moratorium last Friday, and apologised for the death of civilians in a bombing raid on Tuesday. Eritrea refused to withdraw from the 1,000 sq km disputed area of land, a crucial condition of a brokered peace plan in November, under the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

A special UN representative, Mohamed Sahnoun, warned this week - having returned from fruitless talks with the two leaders - that Africa was facing its first "hi-tech war". Both sides

BY LUCY HANNAN
in Asmara

have stockpiled an enormous amount of sophisticated weaponry, making a mockery of the arms embargo threatened by the international community.

Although the guns are quiet, there is an uneasy wait for war in the Eritrean capital. It is seen as inevitable. Windows in some offices have been covered with a shatter-proof lining; non-essential international staff are being evacuated; and the US government has issued a warning for all Americans to get out of the two capitals. Two US warships with about 1,500 marines, helicopters and jets, are on stand-by off the Horn of Africa. "It's 50-50," said one diplomat, reflecting speculation over an imminent air strike by Ethiopia.

The Eritreans themselves - after a 30-year struggle for independence - are so accustomed to war that its threat almost ensures a sense of normality. Traffic continues, businesses stay open and children are in the classroom.

But up to 50km from the southern front-line in Badme, Tsiroyna and Zel Ambessa, civilians are fleeing with their goats, donkeys and camels. For some, it is too late. In Mendefera Hospital, eight-year-old Tigist Hagos is supported on the bed by her father - her legs and hands ripped by shrapnel. She was at a wedding in Adi Quala when it was bombarded.

She is one of the new generation of war-disabled citizens in a country that celebrated peace and independence only six years ago.

IN BRIEF

Surgeon shot over leaky implants

A FORMER NURSE who claimed her plastic surgeon failed to warn her that her breast implants might leak has been convicted of killing him at his office. Theresa Ramirez, 46, was found guilty in San Jose, California, of first-degree murder in the death of Michael Tavis, 53, who performed breast implant surgery on her after a mastectomy.

Avalanche's 12th victim discovered

RESCUE YESTERDAY dug out the body of a 15-year-old boy, the 12th victim of the avalanche which engulfed 18 chalets in France's Mont Blanc region on Tuesday. Rescuers said all missing people had now been accounted for and they were not searching for further victims.

Crusading mayor quits in Kenya

NAJIB BALALA, the mayor who cleaned up the Kenyan city of Mombasa and worked to bring tourists back to the Indian Ocean port, resigned, claiming opponents were frustrating his work. He said he had received death threats from a politician close to President Daniel arap Moi.

Sick man dies as power is cut off

AN ELDERLY Frenchman who could only breathe with the help of a respirator died when Electricité de France cut off power to his home after he failed to pay his bill of £125. The firm in Nice said it had been unaware of the man's health when it cut off power.

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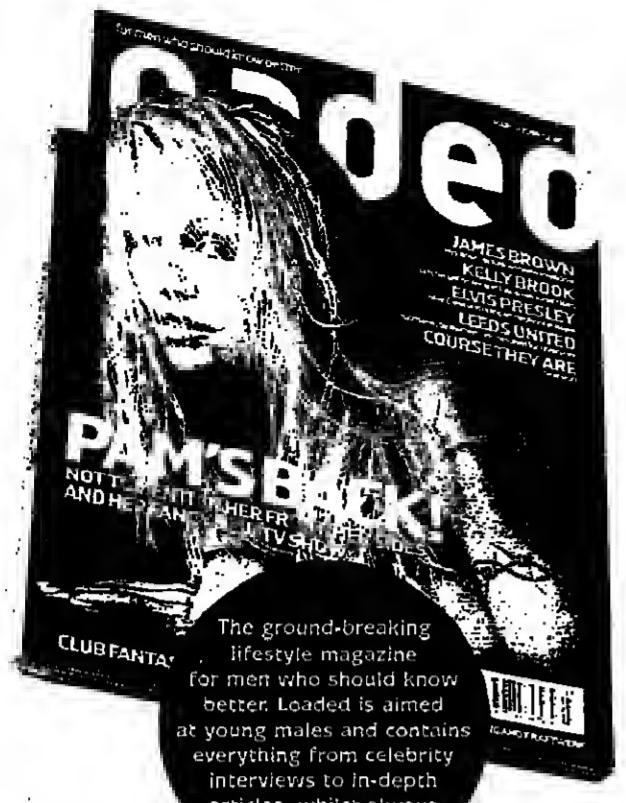
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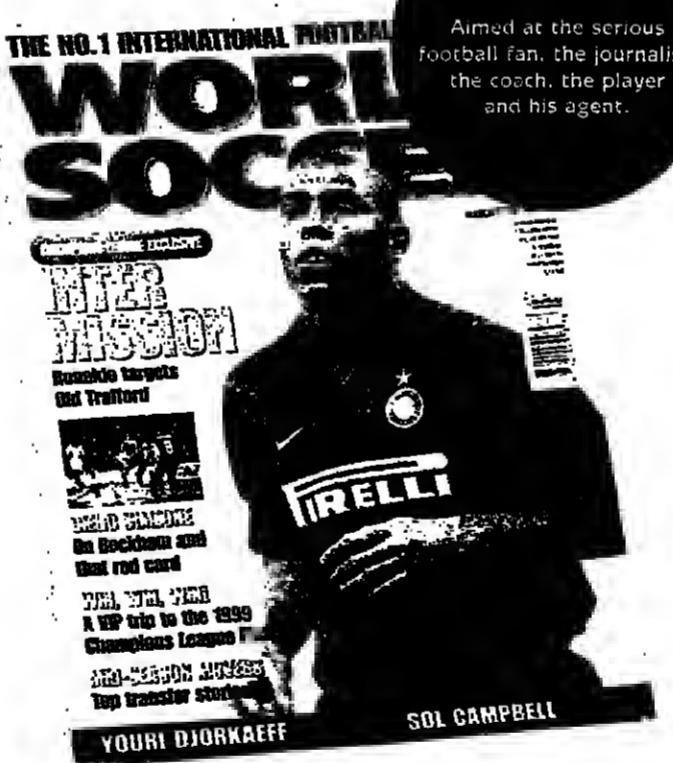
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Deadly legacy of Hiroshima in US

BY ANDREW GUMBEL
in Los Angeles

TRISHA PRITIKIN grew up in the shadow of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation, the weapons plant in the wilderness of eastern Washington state that produced the plutonium for the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs under conditions of the utmost secrecy.

Three years ago Ms Pritikin's father, a former nuclear engineer at the plant, died of thyroid cancer. Her mother has just been diagnosed with the same disease. She herself suffers from hypothyroidism, a hormone deficiency that leads to sluggishness, weight gain and deterioration of the skin.

None of the so-called "Hanford downwinders", who have lived in the immediate vicinity of the nuclear reservation and suffered through long years of secrecy surrounding the true nature of its purpose, are in any doubt that the release of radioactive materials has ravaged the health of the local population, poisoned the air and the soil, infected the local livestock and contaminated the nearby Columbia river.

So when preliminary results of a long-awaited federal health survey were released at the beginning of the month, they caused widespread consternation and disbelief.

The study, commissioned by the federal Center for Disease Control and Prevention, came to the astonishing conclusion that there was no link between increased exposure to radioactive iodine, one of the main contaminants released by the plant, and increased incidence of thyroid-related illness.

The researchers, from the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, claim to have uncovered "rather strong evidence that exposure at these levels... does not increase the risk of thyroid disease".

These results should consequently provide a substantial degree of reassurance to the population exposed to Hanford radiation that the exposures are not likely to have affected their thyroid or parathyroid health," they write.

The downwinders, however, feel far from reassured. "It's clearly ridiculous," Ms Pritikin said. "We think there is a problem with the statistical power of the study. But most of all this does a complete disservice to people... who have seen family members fall ill and die."

Judith Jurji, president of the 3,000-strong Hanford Downwinders Coalition, who grew up near the plant, concurred. "In my family six out of 10 have destroyed thyroid glands, with no history of the disease. It's just clear as a bell," she said.

The Fred Hutchinson Center spent 10 years and \$18m on its study. The researchers do not deny the unusually high incidence of thyroid disease in the Hanford region; rather they miraculously conclude that the nuclear plant and its toxic



A bomb of the Fat Boy type dropped on Hiroshima

emissions are not responsible for it.

According to Tim Connor, an environmental researcher who has spent the past two weeks turning the study inside out in an attempt to undermine it, the problem stems from a faulty line of inquiry. The Fred Hutchinson team did not look at thyroid disease incidence as a whole, but rather asked whether increased exposure to radioactive iodine-131 (I-131) led to increased risk of disease.

Since it was impossible to gauge the exposure of individuals with accuracy, Mr Connor argues, the survey result is just "statistical wizardry".

"They purposely held this

study up as sound evidence that not only is Hanford somehow blameless for the thyroid disease that afflicts Hanford downwinders, they also clearly suggested that the results were superior to previous research indicating a connection between I-131 and thyroid disease," Mr Connor said.

The danger now is that a federal monitoring programme designed to track and contain the devastating health effects of emissions from the nuclear plant will be dropped.

The whole affair is the latest

in a long series of shocking discoveries for the downwinders. For four decades, since the plant opened in 1944, the official line was that Hanford was well-controlled and harmless.

In 1986 the Department of Energy at last released documents that not only stated for the first time that dangerous nuclear materials had been produced at Hanford, but that billions of gallons of radioactive liquids and billions of cubic metres of radioactive gases had been released into the surrounding area.

Between 1944 and 1980, more

than 740,000 curies of I-131

were released (about one tenth of that released at Chernobyl in 1986), contaminating wide areas of Washington State, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and into Canada. Some of the releases were accidental or caused by poor safety standards. Others, however, were deliberate - either as experiments designed to speed up the cooling process in plutonium production, or as tests to check whether the intelligence services were alert enough to detect the emissions.

About two million people

have been exposed to radioactive iodine, which is absorbed by the human body through the thyroid gland and can cause

hormone deficiencies and cancer. For years before the truth began to emerge, local medical professionals noticed a worrying increase in thyroid-related disorders. People with skin conditions caused by thyroid problems were said to be wearing "Hanford necklaces".

The radioactive iodine entered the food chain and spread beyond the area because local cows and goats used for commercial milk production ate contaminated grass.

In some ways, the Hanford controversy marks an advance in American efforts to come to terms with the darker side of its Cold War legacy. A National Cancer Institute study into health problems arising from nuclear testing in the Nevada desert was kept secret for 14 years before it was released.

Nobody doubts the integrity

or the motives of the Fred Hutchinson researchers. But what downwinders bemoan is the apparent insensitivity to the feelings of their subjects. "We've lived with this all our lives," said Tricia Pritikin. "My father is dead and my mother is terminally ill. It would be nice to feel the federal government was fully behind us in our efforts to come to terms with it all."



Hanford Nuclear Reservation: Produced plutonium for the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs Andre Ranieri AP

Gun makers lose landmark damages case

THE GUN industry was humbled yesterday after a federal jury in Brooklyn awarded damages of \$4m (£2.5m) in a lawsuit against manufacturers by families of six murder victims in New York as well as a 19-year-old man who survived being shot in the head.

The verdict, which none of the less exonerated 10 of the 25 gun makers cited in the suit, may be a turning point in the effort by anti-gun activists to challenge the industry. It echoes the campaign by the anti-tobacco movement against the cigarette industry in the United States.

At the heart of the Brooklyn case was the plaintiffs' contention that the gun makers were negligent in overseeing the distribution of guns in the US market. They accused the companies of flooding those states in the US, particularly in the Deep South, with their products in the knowledge that they would then seep into states with tough gun-sale restrictions, such as New York.

"The huge pool of handguns is like toxic waste," a lawyer for the plaintiffs told the jury. "It's been sent down the river by different companies."

In recent months, several US cities, including Chicago, New Orleans, Bridgeport, Connecticut, as well as Dade County,

BY DAVID USBORNE
in New York

ty in Florida, have launched lawsuits against the gun industry. The suits are modelled on those filed by a multitude of US states against the tobacco industry. The cities want the gun industry to pay for the cost of combating crime involving guns.

The Brooklyn jury concluded that 15 manufacturers distributed their products negligently and that the negligence of nine of them was a "proximate cause" of the shootings.

The only monetary award was tied to the shooting of the surviving man. Steven Fox was accidentally shot by a friend in 1995 and still has a bullet lodged in his head. Although the jury said he and his family suffered \$4m in harm, it awarded him only about \$500,000 (£310,000), based on the market share of the three companies linked to that shooting. They were American Arms Inc, the Beretta USA Corp and Taurus International.

"I thank God we absolutely won," declared Freddie Hamilton, whose son, Njizi, was killed by a bullet in 1993. She predicted that the verdict would herald a "whole new phase" of litigation against the gun industry.

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The only Joyce scholar in Baghdad

WEEK IN THE LIFE

MOHAMMED DAWEEESH, BAGHDAD

MOHAMMED Daweesh should be lecturing young Iraqis on the wonders of English literature. Instead he acts as resident intellectual and translator at the BBC office in Baghdad.

Mohammed has come to realise that working for the foreign media involves hours that few academics would accept. "There's always something to do. My colleagues never seem to sleep," he says with a mischievous grin.

"I live out of town in the small suburb of Dora with my wife, Samira, and our three children. We have a modest house and my wife teaches English in the mornings. At home we are happy but when you look around and see what has happened to this country, you have terrible despair," he said.

The deplorable state of the country's infrastructure, the intermittent electricity, and a new phenomenon, child beggars on the streets, compound the gloom. "Never in Iraq before have we seen such a thing. Every day there are more in the streets, people with no work and no livelihood. It is a terrible thing. You know, we Iraqis are very proud and this really hurts me," he said.

Wednesday was the most important day for many years for Mohammed. It was not the air duelling between allied and Iraqi warplanes in the south of the country that preoccupied him, nor the meeting of the country's Revolutionary Command Council, but an important interview. It was his viva voce, the oral examination that would decide whether he would be awarded the title Doctor of Philosophy for his unusual thesis. The subject is a semi-translation of James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*. "I am not really nervous," he claimed before heading off to the examination centre, "but this is six years' work and I hope there will be no problem."

To get to the university would usually involve a long

A short, almost throwaway phrase in *Ulysses* drew Mohammed into the rich and complex world of 20th-century literature. The passage concerns a cat asleep next to some children playing marbles, as the novel's hero, Leopold Bloom, journeys through Dublin. Deciding to avoid the cat, Bloom remarks to himself: "Better not to bother them. Mohammed cut his sleeve in order not to bother one." The



Mohammed Daweesh, BBC translator and student of James Joyce (left, by Jacques Emile Blanche). Dr Daweesh's research is hampered by sanctions against Iraq National Portrait Gallery/Richard Downes

intriguing reference to the Muslim Prophet in a novel whose central character is a Dublin Jew perplexed Mohammed, who was studying linguistics at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh.

Months of independent research failed to throw light on

the reference, but a chance encounter with a Sufi mystic revealed its source: the legends that have built up among Sufi scholars. One legend surrounding the Prophet told of his waking from an afternoon siesta to find a cat asleep on his long sleeve. "He did not want

to wake the cat, so he got a scissor and he cut his sleeves, left them there under the cat and went away," said Mohammed.

The episode speaks of the gentleness of the Prophet and is treasured in certain Muslim traditions.

"I wonder how James Joyce

got this story. It is amazing. One would have to have a deep knowledge of the life of the Prophet to know this sort of detail. I spoke to many religious people here in Baghdad. They couldn't tell me anything about it."

"Perhaps he found it when

he was in Trieste, from the Bosnian Muslims," he said.

From the age of 17 the work of Joyce and another Irish writer, Samuel Beckett, has fascinated him. "I started to read Beckett first but quickly realised that Joyce was in many ways the power behind Beckett. So I started reading Joyce. First Dubliners, then A Portrait of the Artist until I eventually came to Ulysses. What a novel, what an extraordinary project. I remember the first days reading it. It was very difficult, very complex, but absorbing."

His thesis on translating the novel into Arabic will now be followed by an attempt to translate the entire work.

Mohammed's greatest ambition is to walk the route of Bloom's travel through Dublin on Bloomsday, 16 June. That looks increasingly unlikely as sanctions have isolated even literary scholars such as Mohammed from the international mainstream. Last year he wrote to the British Library lending department in Yorkshire, requesting copies of the Joyce Quarterly journal. As an overseas member with credit coupons bought when he was resident in Britain, he was not prepared for the caustic reply: "They refused, saying they couldn't process my application because of sanctions imposed by the British Government, and they warned me. They said don't send any further requests until sanctions are lifted. It is depressing, upsetting. James Joyce has nothing to do with chemical weapons or biological secrets," he said, the look of bewilderment mixed with genuine hurt visible in his large brown eyes.

"The Western commitment to honouring sanctions has gone too far. It does not differentiate between individual needs and military needs," he said, before packing up his office materials and heading home for the day.

Tucked into his satchel is his latest project: the translation of a long obituary of the poet Ted Hughes. "I have always liked this poet. He is full of strange and powerful insights into nature and the violence that lies just below the surface of our lives," he said, before braving the chilly streets of Baghdad for a taxi to take him home. The article comes from a British newspaper sent by a colleague in London, in defiance of the intellectual embargo. "We've got to keep our minds alive, somehow. I'm sure the author and *The Independent* newspaper will forgive me."

The charming smile speaks volumes for the resilience and resourcefulness of the intellectuals and scholars that have stayed behind and survived in Iraq against enormous odds.

RICHARD DOWNES

White-knuckle control on the old Silk Road

SHE COULD pass for a lollipop lady. She is a small, cheery woman with a winning grin ornamented by a couple of finger-widths of gold buck teeth.

She loves a natter, too, although here the good humour fades as she hones in on her theme: the human rights abuses of Uzbekistan, third most populous of the ex-Soviet republics.

If proof were needed that dissidents come in many forms, it could be found in Mukhdabar Akhmedova. She is 60, a devout Muslim, and a brave, angry and alarmingly rare critic of her nation's leadership.

Because of her outspoken views, she has been bugged, followed, harassed and dispatched to prison for six months (for slandering the president). It has not silenced her. She still says the people have been "cheated", but most of them are too scared to say so. And, in her view, the chief villain of the piece is the president, Islam Karimov.

The 23 million people of Uzbekistan are hovering between the old Soviet world, with its knee-jerk repressive and paternalistic impulses, and a new society, a secular nation that can hope, one distant day, to be reasonably free. Now, as Ms Akhmedova points out at

length, the former overwhelmingly prevails.

The media is heavily censored. Only a couple of Russian newspapers are allowed. When *The Independent* discussed posting a copy of the newspaper to two junior government officials, they looked worried and insisted that the package be sent to their superiors.

Uzbek - mindful that it is a crime to "offend the honour and dignity" of the president - talk carefully with outsiders. It took no more than a three-minute conversation with a woman selling jewellery, in a gold market in the 2,500-year-old Silk Road city of Bukhara, before a hefty man in a black leather jacket appeared at my side. The woman spotted him first: "We have a great president," she suddenly told me.

Foreign journalists passing through Uzbekistan's airports are handled by intourist - the Soviet agency used by the KGB to monitor outsiders. And visiting correspondents are expected to report to the "shakins" - the local administration - on arrival in a new town.

The man behind this authoritarian system is the 60-

opposition activities on false charges," said a 1997 US State Department report on Uzbekistan.

Main opposition parties - such as Erk (Freedom) and Birlik (Unity) - have been shut down; almost all opposition has been driven underground.

The government says it is seeking to build a "secular democratic state", and to widen the institutes of civil government.

Placards bear the president's epigrammatic sayings in the streets and public buildings. His works are taught in schools. In short, Mr Karimov is a man who, as one Western observer put it, exerts "white knuckle control" over his fellow citizens.

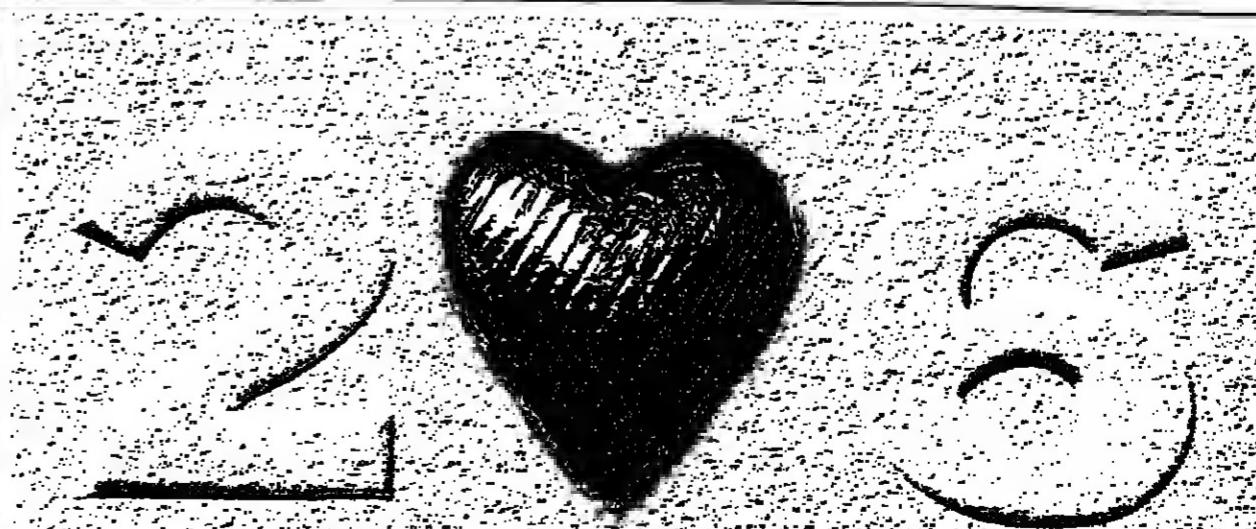
Is this the real Mr Karimov? His apologists say no. They cite the mess that Russia is now in after trying to rush through "shock therapy" reforms. Some, they argue, was not built in a day.

Meanwhile, Ms Akhmedova intends to keep up the pressure. The authorities won't like it, but that does not bother her. "They can't touch me now," she said cheerfully, as we left her tumbledown two-roomed house in the capital, Tashkent. "There would be an international scandal. I am well known."

Let's hope so.



Mukhdabar Akhmedova: Standing up for freedom



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حكمة من الفصل

Van Miert's radar locks on to BAe

LONDON AND Brussels look like they are on a war footing again, this time over the British Aerospace-Marconi merger. Even though the deal is an all-British affair involving two defence companies, the European Competition Commissioner, Karel Van Miert, has locked onto the target.

Mr Van Miert is a zealous regulator whose no-fly zone seems to get bigger by the day. He has therefore decided that the competition aspects of the deal merit examination in Brussels. In Westminster and Whitehall, meanwhile, the hackles are rising. Defence mergers are supposed to be one of the few areas where Brussels surrenders its powers of investigation to national competition authorities.

In the case of BAe and Marconi, the British government is in a delicate position. Whatever gloss Alastair Campbell may choose to put on it, it is clear that Tony Blair would have preferred to see pan-European consolidation taking place rather than the national champion Sir Dick Evans and Lord Simpson



OUTLOOK

came up with BAe and Marconi will not, therefore, automatically get an easy ride from regulators here.

But it would be understandable if the UK government weren't a little suspicious of the motives of the European Commission in wishing to examine the deal. The way Brussels colluded in the stitch up which allowed Electricité de France to take over London Electricity showed the Commission at its worst. Brussels cleared the deal in advance and then ignored the legitimate grounds cited by the UK authorities for wanting regulatory authority back.

This time Brussels has alighted on the trivial civil competition concerns raised by the BAe-Marconi merger to justify its interference.

Behind the scenes, it would not be surprising to discover that the big guns of Germany and France have been laying down a blanket of artillery in the direction of Brussels. The BAe-Marconi deal leaves both Daimler-Benz Aerospace and Thomson CSF in the cold which is not something the politicians in Bonn or Paris like very much. Even though they may not be able to stop the deal, they can make life uncomfortable for BAe and Marconi.

But the logic says the final arbiter should be London which will probably clear the deal after a little huffing and puffing. The MOD may not like the idea of there being less competition for its custom. But at least it has the Americans to keep BAe-Marconi on its toes. Unlike its continental counterparts, Britain has not always fallen for defence contractors who wrap themselves in the national flag.

The Treasury might like it even less if BAe or Marconi jumped into bed with the Europeans since every defence procurement battle would become a foregone conclusion.

less if BAe or Marconi jumped into bed with the Europeans since every defence procurement battle would become a foregone conclusion.

Banking mergers

ANOTHER WEEK another banking merger? Well not quite. Yesterday, Sir Brian Pitman once again sent the hares running through the UK banking sector with the carefully phrased remark that "preconditions for banking mergers are more auspicious than they were."

With the market itching for a deal, the remarks have been read as a clear signal that Lloyds, now that the integration of TSB is well in hand, is poised to strike - as Sir Brian, one of the most experienced men in the business, surely knew it would.

The question, as always, is where and when, and as far as that goes, Sir Brian was giving few clues, or at least deliberately contradictory ones.

There have been plenty of merg-

ers in the last 18 months. But so far they have all been abroad, while here all we have had is an endless diet of talk and precious little action.

Is that really about to change? Sir Brian and his team have looked at everything both at home and abroad, and so far seen nothing that they particularly like. What they desperately need to make a merger stack up is for some of the weaker players to shed their illusions and resign themselves to their deserved fate. Given the strength of yesterday's results, there is no doubt that in his mind that in the consolidation game he sees Lloyds as being predator rather than prey.

So far the preoccupation within the UK banking sector has been primarily on its own backyard. But the government seems determined to block any mergers which bolster the position of the banks at the expense of the consumer - in other words, precisely the kind that the City wants to see.

Thursday's appointment of an American to head Barclays raises the intriguing possibility of a transatlantic banking deal. Sir Brian for all his talk about how cross-border mergers can destroy value is surely not about to be beaten by anyone, even a former US marine.

BSkyB/Man Utd

THE INDEPENDENT Television Commission and its chief executive, Peter Rogers, have never been held in particularly high regard by the broadcasting companies they are supposed to regulate. In recent years, however, Britain's television companies have become increasingly frustrated with the industry watchdog. Its bureaucratic approach and insistence on regulating everything that appears on television are seen as being increasingly at odds with the new digital world of wide consumer choice.

Nevertheless, even Mr Rogers' most vehement critics would not have thought the ITC capable of such a spectacular own goal by letting it be known that it had opposed

British Sky Broadcasting's takeover of Manchester United in its submissions to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Of course, as the official regulator the ITC is entitled to its opinion on the subject. Unfortunately, it is not clear that Mr Rogers' view is entirely shared by his officials. In a hurried statement issued yesterday, the ITC argued that although it believed the takeover needed "careful investigation" a decision on the outcome of the enquiry was "a matter for the MMC alone."

It seems that, while the ITC put forward a particular case in its submissions to the MMC, Mr Rogers embellished on those views when the panel asked him to explain them.

Mr Rogers has already crossed BSkyB once when the ITC forced the satellite broadcaster to withdraw from the winning consortium for the licence to operate digital terrestrial television. The odds on him surviving in his job beyond next week - when the ITC's main board meets - must be slim.

AT&T set to sell its 22% stake in Telewest

BY PETER THAL LARSEN

AT&T, the US telecoms giant, is thought to be preparing to sell its long-distance telecommunications business in the UK and its shareholding in Telewest, the cable operator, as a condition for the European Commission clearing its \$10bn alliance with British Telecom.

The commission is ready to give its formal approval to the joint venture, in a move that would clear one of the hurdles in BT and AT&T's attempts to achieve regulatory approval for the deal.

The US Department of Justice and the Federal Communications Commission is still investigating the alliance.

The European Commission, which has been investigating the agreement since last October, has concluded that the alliance should be allowed to go ahead provided that AT&T sells some of its assets in the UK.

Karel van Miert, the European competition commissioner, reportedly told an audience in Belgium on Thursday evening that he was ready to clear the deal if the disposals were made.



Van Miert: Says an assets sale condition of alliance

Ecuador abandons fixed exchange rate

BY LEA PATERSON

DEALERS IN the currency markets yesterday claimed their second Latin American scalp of the year, when Ecuador followed the example of Brazil and abandoned defence of its fixed exchange rate.

The Ecuadorean sucro tumbled almost 20 per cent after the central bank said it would stop maintaining fixed trading bands against the dollar.

Speaking at a press conference in Quito, Luis Jacome, head of the central bank, said the authorities would still intervene in the currency markets if the sucro came under speculative attack. According to Mr Jacome, the devaluation will help preserve Ecuador's dwindling foreign currency reserves.

The central bank has spent close to \$200m over the last month attempting to defend the sucro, and also hiked short-term interest rates to more than 100

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Footsie fades despite early boost from banks

BANKS BOLSTERED the stock market. At one time Footsie was riding 144 points higher, with the Lloyds TSB figures inspiring the banking sector and encouraging other blue chips to move ahead.

All that was needed to ensure another high performance session was further progress in New York. But, at least during London hours, the Americans failed to oblige.

Footsie reversed into the red, recording an 8.3 fall before staging a rally, closing at 5,590.7, up 62.2.

Supporting shares stayed in positive territory with the mid cap index edging forward 0.7 to 5,187.7 and the small cap continuing its recovery run with an 11.2 advance to 2,237.

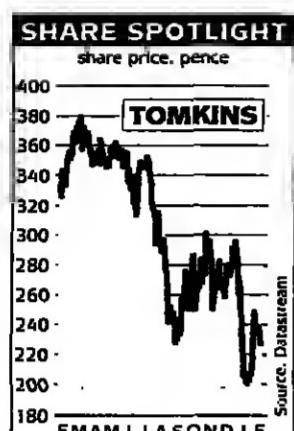
However, if the bankers had not been in such exhilarating form progress would have been much more muted.

Lloyds kicked off the banking profits season with a much more confident display than at

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN



INTRIGUING DEVELOPMENTS are rumoured at perennial Irish oil punt, Bula Resources, unchanged at 1.25p. Albert Reynolds, the former Irish premier, is said to be on the verge of becoming chairman. In a further shake-up two other newcomers will join the board with three directors quitting. A cash-raising exercise is also likely and there is talk of oil developments in Libya and Iraq. Bula was last above 2p two years ago.

One time seemed likely. It offered clear hints that the market may not have to wait too long for its next major takeover. The shares, at one time up 83.5p, ended 68p higher at 85.5p.

Barclays, still drawing support from the arrival of new chief executive Michael O'Neill, jumped 96p to 1,516p and Bank of Scotland gained 60.5p to 862.5p.

The banking excitement

mark US court ruling found handgun makers liable over shootings in New York. Around 25 makers were prosecuted including Tomkins Smith & Wesson off-shoot.

The ruling will almost certainly encourage more court cases, with the gun makers facing legal expenses as well as potential damages payable. The shares, at one time down 16p, ended 4.75p up at 229.75p helped, no doubt, by the group's share buy-back programme which embraced another 500,000 at 228.5p.

British American Tobacco, too, was under negative US influences. The astonishing \$51.5m judgement in favour of a cancer sufferer who sued the Philip Morris tobacco giant, stubbed BAT 9.5p to 579p. Gaffafer fell 8p to 414.5p and Imperial Tobacco 4.5p to 712p.

General Electric Co, down 26p last year on hopes of Falkland Islands oil, fell 1.5p to 16.5p, a low.

Austin Reed, the menswear retailer, which has fallen sharply in the past year, smartened up with a 11.5p gain to 99p. The market was puzzled by some small but persistent buying orders. Last year the shares touched 215p.

Desire Petroleum, riding 215p last year on hopes of Falkland Islands oil, fell 1.5p to 16.5p, a low.

CCI, THE old clay pigeon business suspended at 125p, is planning to return to market as a computer group. It is taking over software and hardware distributors and will become XKO Group. As part of the deal CCI is being raised through a share placing. The revamp has been organised by Simon Bartlett who becomes deputy chairman and finance director. CCI shares arrived on AIM in 1996 and moved between 14.5p and 190p.

WPP was one to benefit from an expected profits announcement next week. The advertising group hardened 21.25p to 472p. Around 21.0m against £17.4m is the likely outcome. Even Rank, the struggling leisure group, perked up ahead of results. It is expected to suffer a 45m fall to 238m. The shares rose 4.25p to 203.25p.

Engineering fell back as takeover excitement faded; Morgan Crucible lost 15.5p to 211p and Vickers 6.5p to 138.5p. Builders remained strong, reflecting the low interest age.

Barratt Developments, firmed 5p to 271.5p and Berkeley 23.5p to 588.5p.

Berisford, the kitchen and catering equipment group, ended 7p higher at 205.5p after rejecting a break-up approach.

London & Edinburgh Publishing held at 10.75p. It placed, through Townsley & Co, 1.1 million shares at 11p. On Monday the company thought to be in talks for a substantial acquisition produced an upbeat trading statement indicating profits for last year could approach £400,000.

SEAG VOLUME: 1.17bn

SEAG TRADES: 96152

GULTS: 11.61 -1.12

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SPORT

Rugby Union: Former Lions manager sets out on mission to restore 'culture' of the English game



Fran Cotton: 'The Scottish, Welsh and Irish are our rugby friends, yet we have been completely duplicitous with them. We have tried to act like bully boys and they don't like it'

Empics

Calzaghe provides the main attraction

BOXING

BY GIAN LEACH

RUUD GULLIT'S heavily hyped introduction of "sexy" football to the North-east may have boosted support for tonight's world championship boxing promotion in Newcastle. The main-eventers, Joe Calzaghe and Robin Reid, are, after all, uncommonly handsome and their combined style might have outweighed the lack of substance left in a fight card hit hard by a series of withdrawals.

Only two of the originally advertised four world title fights now remain, following the cancellation of contests featuring Herbie Hide, the World Boxing Organisation heavyweight champion, and Harry Simon, the WBO's light-middleweight titleholder. The 18-fight card is now headlined by Calzaghe's third defence of the WBO super-middleweight title against Reid, plus Richie Woodhall's second defence of the World Boxing Council version of the 12-stone championship, against the eccentric Italian Vincenzo Nardiello, a former holder of this title.

"It's the business we're in," complained the promoter, Frank Warren. "In football, if a player gets injured, the team still plays. I'm not happy. But we've still had a great response from the people of Newcastle." He predicts a near-sell-out at the 10,800-seat Telewest Arena.

Warren had successfully featured established stars such as Nigel Benn and Naseem Hamed in Newcastle previously, but tonight's contestants are from the next generation, fighters who have been developed on satellite rather than terrestrial TV. It is, therefore, heartening for Warren that this show has been so well supported at the box office.

But this is hardly the dream return to the big stage that Warren had been hoping for following the settlement, at a cost of £7.5m, of his 14-month legal war with his former partner Don King, and his increasingly acrimonious split with Hamed.

Calzaghe, 27, replaces Hamed as the star of Warren's stable. The Gwent southpaw, unbeaten in 25 fights (23 KOs), is fast, vicious and hard-hitting, as shown by his title-winning fight against Chris Eubank in October 1997, and two defences last year before being sidelined by hand injuries.

But Calzaghe's attempts to emulate Hamed's extravagant ring entrances are proving nothing short of embarrassing. It would be crass to judge him so were it not for the premium Calzaghe himself places upon such superficialities. Much of Calzaghe's pre-fight banter has centred on a belief that he is "better looking" than 27-year-old Reid, a former WBC champion and part-time male model who has won 26 of 28 fights (one loss, one draw, 18 KOs). It is likely that Reid will look the worse for wear after 12 tough rounds. Calzaghe should retain by decision, as should the 30-year-old Woodhall, who has a point to prove following a lacklustre performance last time out.

Sky TV will be less than happy with the disintegration of the British half of a transatlantic pay-per-view double-header that also features Oscar De La Hoya's WBC welterweight title defence against Ike Quartey in Las Vegas. Sky has already suffered a major body blow this week when Hamed signed away worldwide TV rights to the American cable giant Home Box Office, with whom Sky must now negotiate in order to continue televising Hamed's fights. But De La Hoya is the biggest non-heavyweight star in boxing and continuing his unbeaten run tonight will afford Sky some comfort.

Cotton leads the call for change

FRAN COTTON in a line-out on the 1977 British Lions tour of New Zealand, looking like a creature recently risen from a primeval swamp, is one of the most indelible of all sporting images. But now Cotton believes that his beloved rugby union is in a more even deeper and dirtier than that one in Wellington.

On Thursday morning Cotton - once as formidable a loose-head prop as international rugby has seen, and more recently an equally formidable manager of the Lions tour to South Africa - picked me up at Macclesfield station in Cheshire. His sleek Mercedes offered a hint that Cotton Traders, the clothing company he founded 12 years ago with his former England colleague Steve Smith, is thriving mightily.

As we cruised towards the Cotton Traders empire in Altrincham, Cotton's carphone rang. Suddenly the Merc was filled with the deep and unmistakable voice of Bill Beaumont, calling to register his dismay at the state of English rugby.

Cotton believes that the management board of the Rugby Football Union is leading the game - if he swiftly adds, it can be said to show any leadership qualities at all - to disarray. He is one of the most powerful advocates of the so-called Reform Group, whose stated objective is to depose the board, to introduce policies designed to win back the trust of the Scottish, Welsh and Irish rugby unions, and to re-



BRIAN VINER

store the "culture" of the game in England.

While it is impossible to imagine Cotton actually turning cartwheels, he certainly shed no tears at this week's news that Sir John Hall is to sell his rugby interests at Newcastle. "Sir John and other investors filled a massive vacuum that was created when professionalism was introduced in a totally ill-considered way," said Cotton.

In the Cotton Traders boardroom, he warmed to his theme, starting with the "fiasco" of England's brief expulsion from the Five Nations tournament. "That must be the biggest embarrassment in rugby history," he said. "To be expelled, and then reinstated within 15 hours only because they were forced to accept unequivalently the Five Nations accord, which should never have been broken in the first

place. In business, you would never allow yourself to get backed into a corner like that."

The Scottish, Welsh and Irish unions were entitled to feel aggrieved with the English stance, added Cotton who, nearly a year ago, resigned in disgust as vice-chairman of the management board. "These people are our rugby friends, we've been playing them for years, yet we have been completely duplicitous with them. We have tried to act like bully boys. And they are proud men, they don't like it.

"Besides, it would have been a disaster to replace the Five Nations with a super-tournament for England, France, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa, as some of the management board wanted. Scotland, Ireland and Wales being strong ought to be as important to us as it is to them."

"We should be working to expand European rugby. It is fantastic that Italy is joining the Five Nations, that a game still perceived as Anglo-Saxon suddenly has a Latin country involved. Now let's work on Germany. We have millions of people to market the game to in Europe. In the southern hemisphere there are an awful lot of sheep."

The RFU's deal with Sky television, Cotton added, "has been an absolute disaster for the game, dividing the five nations at a time when we needed unity of purpose".

"Believe a certain level, the game will only survive by staying amateur. Take my old club Newton-le-Willows. They have lost 10 players to Southport because Southport are paying them 30 quid a week. It's a crazy situation. I went to a meeting at another of my old clubs, Liverpool St Helens, and they are just overwhelmed by it all. They don't want to stop paying travelling expenses

because someone down the road will. But they can't afford it. We need a blanket ban on the payment of players below a certain level, and funding should instead go into clubhouses and youth policies."

"Look at Billy Beaumont's club, Fylde. They get £250,000 a year from the Sky pot and it's making good sense.

"First of all, the deal that the Celts did with the BBC was actually far better," said Cotton. "Last Saturday, the BBC had 6.6 million viewers for the double-header [Ireland v France and Scotland v Wales] with not a white shirt in sight. Before Christmas, when England played the world champions, there were 500,000 viewers on Sky. So it is clearly not a good deal in terms of selling the sport."

"Then there is the £4.1 million given each year to the professional clubs. Who decided on that figure? It is an inflated value and it does the game a great disservice, because all it is doing is fueling the rampant payment of players."

"Below a certain level, the game will only survive by staying amateur. Take my old club Newton-le-Willows. They have lost 10 players to Southport because Southport are paying them 30 quid a week. It's a crazy situation. I went to a meeting at another of my old clubs, Liverpool St Helens, and they are just overwhelmed by it all. They don't want to stop paying travelling expenses

so there are lots of lads not getting a game. And naturally they lose interest. Orrell very often can't get fixtures for their second and third XVs, clubs that used to run eight teams are down to three. The game is in crisis and desperate for positive leadership."

If the Reform Group gets a chance to provide that leadership, they will devolve the day-to-day running of rugby to four provincial unions, explained Cotton. "The current league system doesn't work because of the distances involved. Twickenham doesn't know how to run rugby in the north of England, its proposals show it doesn't even know the geography of the place. They can run the international side and govern the game, and autonomous provincial unions will look after the day-to-day affairs. As for the top end of the game, if the ERU were to stand up and say that it is fully supportive of the International Rugby Board, and that the Five - soon-to-be Six - Nations is the collective property of those nations, relations with our international partners would be transformed overnight."

As I took my leave of the Cotton Traders boardroom, following Cotton's impressively articulate and impassioned monologue, I asked him about that famous 1977 photograph of him in New Zealand. It took him three days to get all the mud off, he said. Would that rugby could clean up its act as quickly.

"But professionalism will only account for one per cent of the game. The remaining 99 per cent will return to the amateur principles that allowed this game to thrive. Otherwise the tragedy is that about to half rugby league, in which a super-league gets all the money and the rest are left to get on with it, will happen to us."

Cotton also believes that professional playing regulations have damaged rugby's grass roots. "They have to have a certain number of subs on the bench, front row cover,

The dangers of planning ahead in Rotherham

DETAILED PLAN. Detailed plan. Forgive me, but I get uncomfortable when I see those words together. Because in my experience, you can say only one thing with certainty about a detailed plan. It won't happen.

Let me share with you, by way of evidence, Rotherham.

That is, my trip to Rotherham on behalf of a sadly defunct Sunday newspaper some years ago.

Admit it. You're hooked already.

Anyway, this was the schedule: Get up to Rotherham. Book into hotel. Find park where fun run involving local lad-made-good, Peter Elliott, is due to take place. Watch Elliott, newly installed Commonwealth 1500 metres champion, run.

Then interview him about prospects for coming season. Eat. Drink. Return to hotel. Sleep. Return home.



MIKE ROWBOTTOM

Hardly an excruciatingly detailed plan, I grant you. But quite complex enough to unravel.

The hotel was, effectively, a boarding house with add-ons, and my room was in a separate block

close to the main building. Soon after I went in, the speaker by my bed began playing Radio 1 at maximum volume. My reactions in such cases are usually spot on.

With some judicious pressing of buttons, I quashed the noise in a split-minute.

Elliott was already there when I got to the park, but something in his face betrayed trouble. His Achilles tendon was playing up again. All very disappointing. But he would contribute to the charity fund-raising occasion by getting the field of several hundred strong under way.

So the Olympian found himself standing on a podium with a starting pistol raised high above his head - a starting pistol that, for some reason, he was unable to fire. He fiddled with it a bit as the dense mass

of runners waited, the pressure of bodies forcing those at the front to tip over the line. Then he raised his arm and tried again. Nothing.

By now the front markers had advanced 20 yards to accommodate the gathering momentum of those behind, and as Elliott, face flushing beneath his cropped ginger hair, made one more hopeless attempt, the will of the people became indomitable and the whole mass of runners straggled on their way.

Afterwards, the embarrassed Olympian explained that, as he had said, his Achilles tendon was playing up again, but that he was hoping for the best and there was no reason to suppose he wouldn't be back to full training within the week. Although you always had to be cautious.

Quite a scoop, I'm sure you'll agree.

The eating and drinking bits went smoothly. Particularly the drinking bits, as I recall.

Odd thing, but the location of the hotel seemed to have changed by the time I made my way back. The landmarks of the railway station and shopping precinct never registered on my screen, and I found myself exploring mysterious, suburban avenues under the yellow flare of street lights. A fine rain began to fall - the kind you hardly register until you realise your collar is soaked.

It was after midnight by the time I got back. The main entrance was locked and the lights were off. I buzzed the buzzer for several minutes. It appeared to be in the same working order as Elliott's pistol.

There was nothing else for it. If I couldn't get the key to my room, at least I could get under cover so I made my way into the sub-board-ing house, climbed the stairs and curled up in my wet coat outside my door. As do.

Sleep did not come easily. But it departed effortlessly at 5am when the speaker by my bed burst into life. Radio 1 again, and even through the door it sounded very loud indeed.

A door opened down the corridor and a man in pyjamas with sticky-up hair stared at me without saying anything. I assume he didn't say anything, although if he had said anything I would have been unable to hear him.

The radio switched itself off after a few minutes. And back on again a few minutes later. And off again.

Perhaps someone had been fiddling about with the alarm buttons. Someone...

Let me share with you, by way of further evidence, Grimsby.

That is, my trip to Grimsby on behalf of the same Sunday newspaper some years ago.

The idea was to interview Steve Cram, who was taking part in the Northern Championships, only that plan had to be altered as he pulled out at short notice with a calf problem, so I switched my attention to the up-and-coming middle-distance runners Craig Winrow and Paul Burgess, only as it turned out they had a bad day and finished well down the field, which meant I had to...

On second thoughts, I won't tell you about Grimsby. You've probably got the picture by now.

Rugby Union: Reform Group's plan for Anglo-centric clubs at odds with players' foreign approval

Melting pot's successful recipe

GO ON, INHIGE YOURSELF. Pick an Allied Dunbar Premiership XV based not on reputation, but exclusively on current form: a multi-faceted, multi-national side you would happily send into battle this very afternoon with your life in their hands. Many locals on the team-sheets? No, thought not. You would have to be a one-eyed Old Harrovian with John Bull underwear and Kipling obsession to even dream of selecting a home-grown back division, let alone a native outside-half. Maybe the prophets of doom are right: perhaps the English are facing meltdown in the melting pot.

It is an issue that is likely to burst wide open once again in the coming weeks as our old friends the politicians prepare to bombard us with more heavy shelling from the trenches. The Rugby Football Union's Reform Group is proposing the establishment of a new generation of "super clubs" with up to 90 per cent of the places ring-fenced for England-qualified players. Can it be right, they ask, that the most complete stand-offs on view each Saturday should be two former All Blacks, two Frenchmen and an ambitious little thirtysomething from Pietermaritzburg? Good question.

Of course, the balloon really will go up if Clive Woodward asks Joel Stransky to attach a red rose to the very part of his breast that once bore a dancing Springbok. There is no doubt that in perfect world, the England coach would not contemplate asking Leicester's hugely accomplished South African to steer the country with the biggest playing population on the planet through the highs and lows of this year's World Cup. Imperfection is the curse of the age, though. It now seems clear that Woodward will indeed bite the pragmatic bullet if he decides there is no alternative. You have to feel for the bloke. His predicament merely underlines the knuckle-twisting complexity of the foreign legion debate.

"It's very difficult, all this," Woodward agreed this week. "I know what I think should be happening. I think that the clubs and the union should be standing on the same side of the fence and working together to produce the best possible conditions for England's success at international level. I think that the union should be pumping money into the clubs, in much the same way as the Test and County Cricket Board helps finance the counties. I still look at other rugby nations and envy the systems they have put in place to ensure a flow of talent through the ranks."

"But when push comes to shove, I have to come at things as a professional coach running a professional team, even though I'm effectively having to

BY CHRIS HEWETT

do it through 12 or 14 other companies and have no real input into what goes on with the players in so far as no club coach is likely to select according to my wishes. In the end, England expects. Especially in World Cup year. This is a business enterprise as well as a sporting one and there are a lot of things at stake, not least my job. If someone like Stransky is genuinely the best man for the task and the regulations allow me to pick him, then I'd be daft not to consider it."

"I fully accept, though, that it would be an indictment of our own system. I've nothing against foreign players earning their living in the Premiership; as long as clubs aren't picking them up and above English talent just because they happen to be paying them a fortune, then fine. But I get a little impatient with the constant comparisons with football. Rugby isn't at all like football. Football is a level playing field; most major football leagues are stacked with imports. It's different with rugby. You don't see outsiders playing Super 12 rugby, do you?"

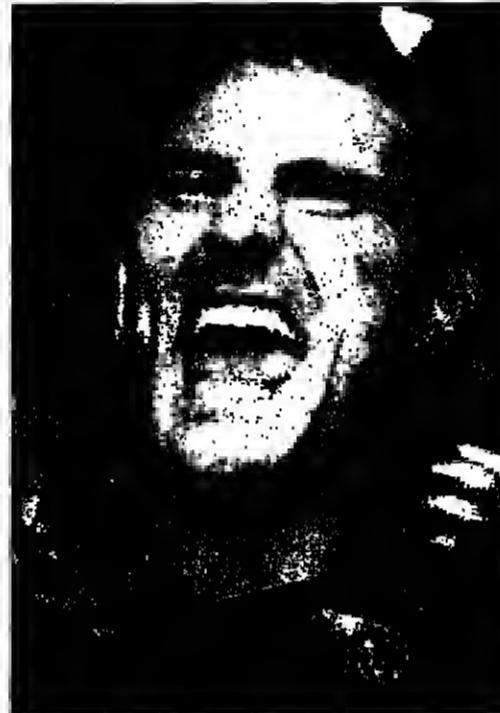
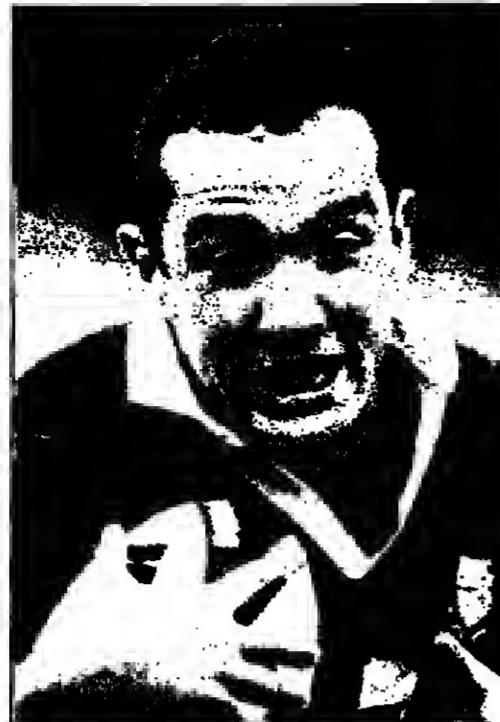
No one knows better than Woodward how the purple-faced traditionalists are likely to react if he rejects Little Englandism and clammers into bed with the open door brigade; after all, it was only a year or so ago that the coach himself was banging the nationalist drum like Buddy Rich on steroids.

But 18 long months in the political crossfire have changed him. There are, he now realises, no simple answers or cosy solutions. Only differences of opinion.

The import problem, if indeed it is a problem, is merely one of the more pressing in an entire catalogue of dilemmas. Jost van der Westhuizen, Gary Teichmann, Josh Kronfeld, Ian Jones and dear old Jonah Lomu have all been linked with moves to England after the World Cup. If Van der Westhuizen goes to Saracens and Teichmann to Wasps, what happens to Kyran Bracken and Lawrence Dallaglio? Will they stay, or will they go?

On the other hand, virtually every England Test regular revels in the heady cultural and tactical mix that gives the Premiership its uniqueness.

"Negative comments about overseas players come from outside the game," says Jeremy Guscott in this month's *Rugby World* magazine. "Premiership players all believe the foreign signings have had a big impact on the professional game over here. The way I see it, an overseas player has to make his mark both on the field and in how he integrates into the club and community."



Six of the best currently playing in Premiership One (clockwise from top left): Conor O'Shea of Ireland, South African Brendan Venter, New Zealander Steve Bachop, Pat Lam of Samoa, England's own Lawrence Dallaglio and Federico Mendez of Argentina

Cautious approach followed by Giants

BASKETBALL

BY RICHARD TAYLOR

SHEFFIELD SHARKS are wary of losing ground in the Budweiser League title race this weekend to the joint leaders, Manchester Giants, but elsewhere the focus will be on the commission of inquiry meeting to decide punishments following the "battle of Northgate".

Despite the cautious approach of their coach, Nick Nurse, the Giants must be odds-on for maximum points from tonight's game at Worthing Bears and tomorrow's visit from Leicester City Riders.

But the Sharks, beaten 81-77 by the Giants in their midweek uni-ball Trophy semi-final first leg, face a difficult trip to third-placed Thames Valley Tigers tonight.

A far more daunting weekend awaits Derby Storm and Chester Jets, whose game at the Northgate Arena two weeks ago was halted after 22 seconds by fighting between both sets of players. The commission expects to announce their decision on Monday, which could include fines, suspensions and deduction of points.

Any appeals from the clubs or individuals would theoretically lead to the suspension of any punishment on players or coaches involved. The Derby coach, Bob Donewald, for example, is facing a minimum four-game ban pending appeals, and his club defend a 13-point lead at Leicester on Thursday in the second leg of their uni-ball Trophy semi-final.

But Derby and Chester had to present their cases to the commission by Thursday, ruling out the option of basing any appeals by claiming new evidence.

Hounslow in need of points

HOCKEY

BY BILL COLWILL

FOR HOUNSLOW this weekend's double Premier League fixtures are probably the most crucial in the club's long and distinguished history. Defeat at home last weekend by Bourneville leaves them three points adrift of the Midland club in the relegation play-off position. Points from today's away game at Reading and the visit of Guildford tomorrow are badly needed.

The manager Paul King confirmed that the Seoul gold medallist Jon Potter, who has come out of retirement to help the club, will be playing both days and that the Canadian goal-keeper Hari Kam is back from international duty in Egypt.

King said: "Let's hope the tide has changed. Points will be difficult at Reading and anything will be a bonus. It is essential we take three off Guildford." With Guildford's player-coach Ian Jennings, looking for more goals to become the first player to score 200 in league games, it will not be easy. Southgate, who lost 5-2 to Reading last week, visit Guildford today and entertain East Grinstead tomorrow. They again expect to be without their latest signing, the Australian international Max Diamond.

Surrey, the new First Division leaders, will be looking for victory over Hampstead and Westminster before their South African imports return home for internationals against Australia.

Leicester face examination by Irish imagination

THE BIG Premiership rumble of the season has arrived five weeks early. Until very recently, this campaign was all about next month's tête-à-tête between Northampton and Leicester at Franklin's Gardens; a raw slab of East Midlands tribalism that appeared to represent the Saints' one realistic chance of reeling in the long-time title favourites from the wrong side of the county line. No one gave a second thought to London Irish. Or a third thought, or a fourth.

Since when, everyone in rugby has started thinking – and talking – about the Irish. They

have gatecrashed the mind's eye with the quicksilver imagination of their attacking play and selfless deeds of defensive derring-do. With Dick Best at the helm, Steve Bachop at the fulcrum and Conor O'Shea in his pomp, they have won nine of their last 10 league matches going into this afternoon's near-16,000 sell-out at Welford Road. It is almost as breathtaking to watch these Exiles as it must be to play for them.

All of which probably explains why Best, crafty old fox that he is, wants to dampen expectation rather than inflame it. "Leicester have no weakness-

es," he mused yesterday. "They have seven internationals in their pack and their defence has conceded far fewer points than anyone else. They will probably be worthy champions."

The coach rarely reveals his entire hand and he is not wholly unfamiliar with the black arts of kidology, but on this occasion he was being deadly serious.

Not least because Best has three of his form players – Nick Burrows, Kieron Dawson and Malcolm O'Kelly – on the treatment table. Although he can reintroduce the muscular Robert Todd to his midfield, employ Ryan Strudwick's all-

purpose virtuosity in the second row and recall Isaac Faa'uani'a to a back row also boasting Jake Boer and Rob Gallacher, Welford Road is not the place to attempt victory with a side short of optimum clout.

"Leicester are the final barrier," agreed Best. "If we lose, they go eight points clear of us and it almost becomes a one-horse race."

Not that Dean Richards, whose own England career owed something to Best's guidance during the early years of this decade, was taken in for a moment. "Dick has done exceptionally well in moulding a

new London Irish team," he pointed out. "That's a mark of Dick's talents as a coach and also says something about the quality of the men he has brought in." Deano named no names, but the words Bachop, Boer, Brendan Venter and Kevin Putt, that inspirational little scrum-half from New Zealand via Natal, would have been close to his lips.

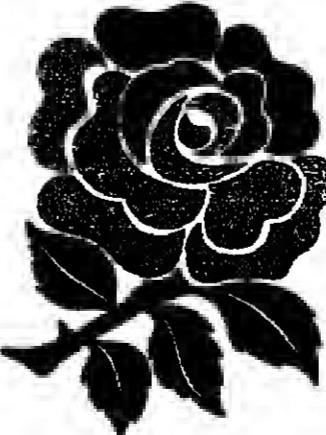
Leicester go in, yet again, without their most gifted three-quarter, Will Greenwood. Indeed, there is deep concern over the chronic groin problems that continue to prevent him doing anything more active

than taking forlorn strolls around Welford Road. Greenwood has played only five matches, one of them as a replacement, for his club this term and the Tigers top brass, and by extension the England management, are now fearful that the 26-year-old centre is suffering from the same condition that once sidelined Jeremy Guscott, his putative European Cup partner, for a season.

Down in the West Country at Gloucester, Kingaholm will be in mourning at the news of Will Carling's withdrawal from the Harlequins squad for today's mid-table contest. The Shed

regulars had been preparing a torrent of verbal vitriol, but a minor leg strain keeps England's former captain safely out of range. More to the point, perhaps, Dan Luger has been forced to vacate his left-wing berth with a similar problem. Wasps, who plunged Bath into another mini-crisis by sticking 35 unanswered points on them last Sunday, give Kenny Logan an immediate recall to the left wing for the match at Bedford. Victory would cement the Londoners' place in the top six, which may well be the cut-off point for any European Cup qualification.

ENGLAND V SCOTLAND NEXT SATURDAY. THERE'S ONLY ONE SIDE TO WATCH...



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Tiutchev a weighty problem for rivals

The former top jump jockey
Steve Smith Eccles analyses
today's Tote Gold Trophy

Rainbow Frontier: Faces a tough task under top weight.

Dreams End: No chance on form shown this season.

Shankar: Well beaten in two outings this term.

Upgrade: Soundly beaten in three runs this season and needs to improve.

Sharpical: Makes his seasonal debut but his trainer, Nicky Henderson, can be relied upon to have him spot on.

City Hall: An eye-catching grey who has disappointed this season. Probably needs better ground.

Rainwatch: Improved to win at Cheltenham in first-time blinkers but seems to lack a turn of foot.

Wakeful: Has shown best form on a sound surface.

Effectual: This fellow steps up in class after posting two fine victories but is likely to be found wanting.

Polar Prospect: Consistent sort but may be going off the boil after nine runs already this season.

Deconpage: Yet to win in this campaign and will do well to finish in the minor placings.

NEWBURY
1.30: Earthmover might end up at too short a price and he faces some decent rivals, including SAIL BY THE STARS who has shaped well in two top-class handicaps.

2.00: If Ask Tom lacks anything for fitness, it will be exposed by CELIBATE who was a good third in the Victor Chandler last time out.

2.35: Tiutchev is the obvious choice, but SHARPICAL also held Champion Hurdle aspirations after his impressive win in this race 12 months ago; he looks ideally suited by this track and by coming from behind off a strong pace.

HAYDOCK
3.15: Marlborough continues on the upgrade and has only a 6lb penalty. But charming newcomer MCHATTIE is built for the game and has already shown decent form over hurdles. He is likely to make this a test from the front and Marlborough could just be vulnerable now that he's dropped in distance.

3.45: STEP ON EYRE is the

Benzon: A solitary victory in a maiden hurdle on fast ground is no recommendation.

Tiutchev: Handily weighted, loves the softer ground and in fine form - he is the one they all have to beat.

Anitge: Cannot possibly make the frame on recent form.

Sadler's Realm: One-paced, and this trip should prove too short.

Vent D'Aout: Won at Taunton last time under top weight but looks out of her league.

Mister Run: Soundly beaten by Tiutchev at Kempton last time and unlikely to reverse the form at the weights.

Sirene Song: I would be surprised to see him finish in the first six.

Conclusion: Even though these handicap hurdles are always tough to predict, I expect TIUTCHEV to land a prize for which he has been laid out. The ground, the trip and the weights are in his favour, and he should get the better of Nicky Henderson's seasonal debutant Sharpical.

2.00 GAME SPIRIT CHASE (Grade 2) (CLASS A) BBC1

£10,000 added 2dm 21f Penalty Value £18,003

1 PHT-E ASK TOM (22) (D) (T Steward-Brown) T 7/10 ... R Gemby

royal blue spats, pink cap

2 24/02 CELEBRATE (21) (Lady Bird Partnership) C Marin 6 11 ... N A Fitzgerald

grey and cream saddle cloth, white ambers, dark blue cap

3 34/01 MULLIGAN (14) (C) (Lady Bird Partnership) C Marin 6 11 ... A Maguire

black, yellow and pink check, yellow sleeves

4 11/02 NEARLY AN EYE (21) (D) (J McNeilly) P Hobbs 6 11 ... J Tizard

black, yellow and pink check, white ambers, yellow cap

5 00/01 NIPPER REED (42) (D) (Miss J Bamford) R Simpson 6 11 ... N Williamson

grey, white saddle, creamish orange sleeves, black cap, white star

6 33/03 OR WISEMAN (21) (D) (Miss J Bamford) R Simpson 6 11 ... A McCoy

royal blue and pink check, pink cap, green spots

- declined -

BETTING: 1-5 Ask Tom, 7-2 Mulligan, 1-3 Celibate, or Royal, 8-1 Nearly An Eye, 1-1 Nipper Reed

18/8 Ask Tom 9 11 10 11 Gatsby 3-5 for T 7/10

FORM GUIDE

Earthmover: Unbeaten in hunting career, jumping better when galloping by 16 lengths at Cheltenham Festival. Every chance when setting out 2nd in handicap in November, returning injured. Plenty of potential, and a possible Gold Cup candidate.

Celibate: A Day-Judd 16 higher than when winning the Whitebread in April, but has disappointed since. Good form in the March, but has had a bit of trouble since. Still has a bit of staying to do.

Nearly An Eye: Showed a welcome change of style last year, but has not won since.

Mulligan: Decided three times last season and, after two wins in January, an unconvincing fourth. Still has a bit of staying to do.

Or Wise Man: Well-tried on his performance at the Cheltenham Festival and in the Whitbread last term. Fair third on reappearance, but below form last time.

Zaggy Lane: Looked winner long way out but then had to wait until completing his 21st lengths from Oban at Taunton (3m3f, heavy). Early fair last time.

Earthmover: Placed in amateur races, last term but not on the handicap proper.

VERDICT: When the season started, Earthmover was the hunger chaser considered most likely to land the Gold Cup. He is now a 20/1 shot for Cheltenham, however, and can only be backed on the basis of his record in the last two seasons on his handicap circuit at Newbury and Ascot, and will probably start a hot favourite today.

Better value lies with ZAGGY LANE and Sirene Song, the former who looked a

little tired on his penultimate start, the latter returning to probably his best form after showing up well for a long way in the Hennessy and Welsh Novices.

Tiutchev: Easy winner at Cheltenham and Kempton (3m8f) lower down a penalty) since the weights for these were published. Very much the one to beat.

Ask Tom: Fifth in the 1987 Champion Chase and won the 1987 Tingle Creek, making him the one to back on form. Performer less well after a setback in last year's Champion and was only at his best to win the race 12 months ago.

Celibate: Firm favourite to be beaten to his best by Earthmover. Last year 2nd over 2m 6f at Cheltenham in the Victoria Derby at Kempton (3m), and 2nd again.

Mulligan: Has been blighted by jumping problems, but enters the reckoning on his merit-free, last-gasp win over Ascot on Doublet (3m2f, good).

Nearly An Eye: Favourite was 1st in a row (at 2m to 2m4f, moist on soft surface) before 6-lengths second to Super Col at Haydock. In form, but fair to find.

Nipper Reed: Sound jumping displays to make all bats start in novice chases, best of course in the last two seasons. Still has a bit of staying to do.

Or Wise Man: Has plenty of talent but too indifferent, refusing to meet stall on one occasion this term. Would have a sound chance if producing his best form.

VERDICT: The robust Or Royal and steed Ask Tom make most appeal on form, but there are clearly doubts about whether either will run to his best today.

Celibate and Mulligan, both with good reason to think their last name might therefore have never led to them it appears at first glance. A win for Nearly An Eye or

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Wigan look
vulnerable
to Leeds

THE INDEPENDENT
Saturday 13 February 1999

FOOTBALL/27



THE SWEeper

BY CLIVE WHITE AND NICK HARRIS



Everton redefine art of shirt-pulling

YOU HAVE just won the FA Cup final, and if you are Matt Jackson in 1995 better still, because you have just helped make the winning goal for Everton against Manchester United. So how do you celebrate? Drink yourself into a stupor? Slap Joe Royle on the back and tell him he's got a job for life? Watch the television recording until the tape wears itself out? No. According to Jackson's wife, Julie, you slip on your husband's match shirt, or whatever it is he wears, and make passionate love to him.

"Almost every player went back to the hotel and made love to his wife with her wearing his husband's shirt," Mrs Jackson tells *Match of the Day* magazine in their latest issue. "Everyone came downstairs and said to each other: 'You've just done it in his shirt, haven't you?'"

"That's not true," interrupted Matt. "I know Dave Watson and his wife slept with the FA Cup between them..."

It was not disclosed how the match-winner, Paul Rideout, and his wife spent the night, but it was possibly less of a knockout than it was for them in Florida the other day. While there on holiday, Rideout was trying to attain the strict level of fitness required for a return to the Chinese league, when during an early morning run he was struck by a reversing station wagon.

Whatever damage was done to the car, the rugged Rideout required only a precautionary check-up, but when his wife arrived at the hospital and saw him in a wheelchair she promptly fainted. Thankfully, both Rideouts made a quick recovery.

The former holders could do with some of Rideout's knockout quality in front of goal against Coventry today in their fifth-round tie at Goodison. Another former Evertonian, David Burrows, is confident they won't find it. The former Liverpool defender, now with the Sky Blues, spent just six weeks at Goodison, but it was long enough to help him maintain his record of never finishing up in the losing side in a Merseyside derby - 10 games in all - and he cannot see Coventry losing to them either.

"We achieved an easy 3-0 win over them in November," he said. "It was one of the poorest Everton sides I've ever seen."

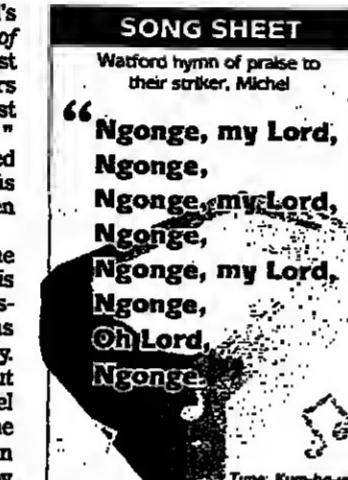
BEING A technical man, Howard Wilkinson will have noted how Zone 14 proved to be the undoing of his England team against France this week. Sports scientists at the Sir John Moore's University in Liverpool recently analysed 24 matches played by the four World Cup semi-finalists as well as 12 games involving sides who failed to qualify for the second round. They divided the pitch into 18 separate zones and came to the conclusion that Zone 14, the area immediately outside the 'D', was where the better teams punished

grow crops. Undeterred, United are ploughing on with their £14m investment. "We've had conditions placed upon its use which mean we have to be able to turn it to agricultural use within 24 hours," George Johnstone, the club's Group Property manager, said. "The theory is if there was an invasion or an outbreak of war that is what we would have to do. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries insists such conditions are imposed." Well, United always were renowned for their home-grown produce.

GEORGE GRAHAM could have told him so after his experiences with Lucas Radebe, but

Gérard Houllier would probably have come to the same conclusion as his erstwhile Leeds counterpart - which is that his African is worth all the aggravation. No sooner, it seems, has Rigobert Song arrived at Anfield than the Cameroon defender is off to play in the African Nations' Cup against Mozambique, thereby missing Liverpool's crucial away game against Chelsea on 27 February. The Merseysiders had better get used to the idea because there is going to be more of the same. Song, signed for £2.6m from Serie A strugglers Salernitana, has assured Pierre Lechantre, the new Cameroon national coach, that he will be available for all international matches. "I remain an Indomitable Lion," the former Metz player proudly declared. Meanwhile, the Liverpool defence faces a mauling at Stamford Bridge.

FOOTBALL'S PAYMASTER, Sky TV, may have carte blanche in deciding when Premiership games should be played, but I wonder if they are aware that their decision to move Aston Villa's home match against West Ham United to Good Friday is in contravention of Villa's articles of association - not that they are likely to care. Apparently, back in 1874, when the club was formed by worshippers of Aston's Methodist Wesley Chapel, it was agreed that the club would not stage matches on Sundays or Good Fridays. Perhaps they have got special dispensation from you-know-who... yes, that's right, Rupert Murdoch.



the opposition. "It's the critical area of the pitch for exploitation of any creative action," Tom Reilly, of the University, said, "and the springboard for true penetration of the defensive line." Brazil's Rivaldo, the Netherlands' Dennis Bergkamp and Croatia's Zvonimir Boban were picked out as major dangers in that area - with France's Zinedine Zidane the most dangerous of all.

WHILE THE bulldozers are never likely to be waiting at the gates of Old Trafford as they have done at the grounds of failing clubs down the year, it's just possible that Manchester United's proposed new training ground could go under the plough. The club's multi-million pound development at Carrington is being built on prime agricultural land, which means that in the event of war it could become Government property and used to

"We achieved an easy 3-0 win over them in November," he said. "It was one of the poorest Everton sides I've ever seen."

MASCOT ON THE MAT

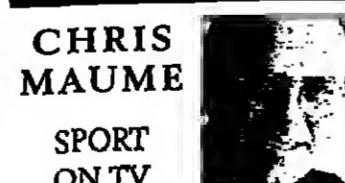
Name: Cyril the Swan.
Club: Swans.
Appearance: Bad-tempered, eight-foot goose who has a penchant for running on to the pitch and upsetting members of the Welsh FA.
Crime sheet: Cyril has only been at the club a matter of months, but already has a list of offences longer than his neck. Abselling down a floodlight, hissing at a linesman, and attacking people into insignificance when you remember the greatest feather in his cap: attracting a dispute charge from the Welsh FA for staging a swan-man pitch invasion after his side took the lead against West Ham in the FA Cup last month. Cyril is up before the break (well, the Welsh FA) in the near future for that.

Paul Stevenson



MY TEAM
STEVE RIDER
CHARLTON

BBC sports presenter, often at the helm on Grandstand
"I served my time behind goals guarded with a varying degree of efficiency by the likes of Duff, Wakeham and Rose at nondescript Second Division matches - all of which live in the memory - eventually being rewarded with a bathting few years in the First Division in the late 80s, and now in the Premiership. Whatever the outcome of the relegation battle I've had the kind of moment that every football follower from SE7 must dream of - to be able to sit in the Grandstand studio on the afternoon of 22 August and tell an audience of five million that 'by my calculations, Charlton Athletic are top of the Premiership tonight.'



CHRIS MAUME

SPORT
ON TV

there is always the impression that he thinks he's a better player than he actually is, and his grins set oddly with the portrait of him in *First Edition's* "The Football Foreign Legion" (Carlton, Tuesday). Over film of him shopping with his wife down New Bond Street, he insisted that "I try to have my heart richer than my wallet." No Ferraris for him, he says. "I prefer to buy flats and houses," he says. "It's a better investment."

NOW WE are at the stage where never a weekend goes by for this observer at least, with at least one more foreign journeyman making his debut; it is hard not to conclude that the Bosman ruling was A Very Bad Thing.

At the beginning of the week, English newspapers picked up on Franck Leboeuf's whinging to *LE* quip about being "club cretin" at Stamford Bridge. The poor petal is underpaid, he reckons, and should be getting at least as much as Chelsea's other World Cup-winning Frenchman, Marcel Desailly. This point is highly debatable given that he is essentially a reserve centre-back for his country, only playing in the World Cup final thanks to Davor Suker, whose despicable play-acting led to Laurent Blanc's dismissal in the semis.

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West Ham was cited as an example of how not to import foreign talent. Mind you, the conclusion - that the way to do it is to fork out for the best rather than mooch round the "everything must go" department - is blindingly obvious, really.

The low point for the club's manager, Harry Redknapp, was the faith he placed in Stéphane Raducanu, who turned out to be the archetypal Bosman tourist, according to Rob Sheppherd of the Express: "Five years ago he was queuing up for a load of

bread. Suddenly the guy comes over with a Rolex on his wrist - two Rolexes he had on the same wrist at one point."

At the other end of the guest-worker continuum is the Hammers' Eyal Berkovic, who, despite having his face famously rearranged by John Hartson's fancy footwork, has settled down on and off the pitch. He was born on a kibbutz and possessed "not a word of English" when he came over - even now, when Rio Ferdinand and Frank Lampard get together, he says, "I understand nothing - they speak Cocknuk".

So he wasn't keen on Southampton, his first foreign posting, where there is no Jewish community to speak of. The move to London worked though, and he's happy living in Golders Green, a ready-made community that most foreigners

don't have. He's sufficiently at home, on the film's evidence, to indulge in a spot of mock road-rage banter with bewildered fellow motorists.

So what do in-comers have to look forward to when they get here, apart from foul weather and thousands of pounds a week? The likes of Dennis Wise, that's what, whose idea of a joke is teaching the new boys to say "thank you hairy crutch" to waitresses instead of "thank you very much". It's a cheap shot (and an old gag) to observe that his English is worse than some of his foreign team-mates, but I don't usually let that deter me, and I'm not about to start now.

One fruitful direction taken by the film was Crystal Palace's Chinese connection - "tactical decision or cutting move?" The signing of Fan Zhixi and Sun Jihai more than simply bolstered midfield and defence. When he comes over the top of a

ridge, it's like he's ski-jumping. Gates tend to be flattened. This human avalanche makes skiing compulsive viewing - some achievement.

The highlight of the week was Will Carling's cameo on *Norland Nannies*, (C4, Thursday), a doco-soap series about the school for childminders to the rich and famous. The occasion was polo at Cowdray Park, with the gels given quality time with rich kids and, more importantly, the chance to put down markers with the parents.

Carling and his girlfriend were there with their baby, and one of the young things caught their eye. They'd be getting in touch, they said. Sadly, a couple of weeks later, the relationship was all over and nurseries would have to look elsewhere. "Another career wrecked by the tabloids," said the acid voice-over.

AS YOU WERE



COULD THIS be the first day at school in 1980 for new recruits into the Lawrie McMenemy Tip-Top Academy of Football Management? Could that be McMenemy (front left) gazing adoringly at his latest pupil, Kevin "just back from Hamburg" Keegan and thinking "by eek lad, I'd like a head of hair like that"? Could that be Dave Watson (far right), pondering his future and wondering whether he's made a terrible mistake by enrolling because he somehow can't see himself as a boss in the future? And could that be Chris Nicholl and Alan Ball (left and right of Keegan), smiling nicely for the camera and thinking "We might screw up as club managers in the future, but at least we'll never get ourselves into contention for that most poisoned of chalices, the England job"? Er... no. But, it could be the day Wor Kev signed for the Saints.

THE PRICE IS RIGHT

THE SWEeper's CUP OF GOOD CHEER

■ LIBERO WAGERS (Four E2 trebles with Stanley): Arsenal to beat Shett Utd (2-7); Leeds to draw with Tottenham (3-4); Shett Wed to draw with Chelsea (11-5); Huddersfield to draw with Derby (11-5).

■ SUNDAY ITV MATCH

Manchester United v Fulham

Draw (E1, 4-1, generally).

■ SUNDAY SKY MATCH

Newcastle v Blackburn

Draw (E2, 9-4, William Hill, Ladbrokes & Stanley).

■ SUNDAY C4 ITALIAN JOB

Cagliari v Lazio

Draw (E2, 2-1, Coral & William Hill).

ORIGINAL RANK: £100.

CURRENT KITTY: £146.82!

TODAY'S BETS: £14.17 (including £1.17 tax paid on).

Alien invasion of the Rolex-wearing Bosmanoids

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DON'T TURN ON A SIXPENCE

DON'T BE A SUPERSUB

THE NEW INDEPENDENT
SPORT SECTION
EVERY MONDAY.

DON'T MISS IT.

DON'T BE HANDBAGS AT DAWN

DON'T SCORE

DON'T SWEEP

DON'T BE STEEPED IN TRADITION

Guide to the FA Cup and Premiership



Manchester United v Fulham



MATCH OF THE WEEKEND (FA CUP FIFTH ROUND, SUNDAY 2.0)

ALEX FERGUSON

could deploy Ole Gunnar Solskjær; Andy Cole (left) and Dwight Yorke in a three-pronged attack tomorrow as his Premiership leaders take on Kevin Keegan's Second Division pace-setters.

Although Ferguson may choose to use all three front men at the same - following their eight-goal haul last week against Nottingham Forest - Fulham's goalkeeper, Mark Taylor, maintains that he does not feel like a condemned man who is about to be had for a late breakfast. "Those guys are on fire at the moment," said Taylor.

"The goals tally tells you that they are the best around and between the three of them, they have by far scored the most goals in the Premiership. But they don't scare us, and

we're not going to be frightened off by that. I'm just going to try to play my normal game and enjoy the whole day."

Vorke, Cole and Solskjær have netted 53 goals between them this season, and it will be Taylor who will stand as the last line in the Cottagers' defence and try to stop them adding to that tally. Ferguson has hinted he will play Solskjær, who despite his bit-part role this season has scored 15 goals, but United will be without the suspended Roy Keane and Paul Scholes. "So they're putting out a wide side," Taylor joked yesterday. "Is there such a thing with United considering the incredible strength in depth they've got?"

At least the Fulham keeper should not be overawed by playing in front of a full house at Old Trafford. The Northern Ireland international kept goal at the Theatre of Dreams two years ago during his brief stint in the Premiership with Southampton. He performed well that day and made a fine save from Eric Cantona before the Frenchman beat him to secure a 2-1 win for United.

"That's a game which is definitely lodged in the memory banks," said the 27-year-old. "It was an unbelievable atmosphere playing in front of 65,000 people. We lost to a late goal from Eric Cantona and although the result went against us, it was still a wonderful experience. I'm really looking forward to going back because for me, playing on grounds like

that helps bring out the best in me." Fulham will be without their striker Geoff Horsfield, who is suspended, so Barry Haynes is likely to partner Paul Peschisolido (right) up front. The Belgian international Philippe Albert, on loan from Newcastle, is ineligible tomorrow but Neil Smith is available after a ban.

United's Jap Stam is available despite doubts over a hamstring problem. Gary Neville is still feeling the effects of an injured knee, but is in the squad and should play.

FULHAM (from): Taylor, Arendse, Brewster, Symons, Colman, Morgan, Uffereck, Finnan, Hayward, Smith, Collins, Shadrack, Nelson, Hayes, Peschisolido, Lahmeh, Salas, Peter Schmeichel. **United:** Scholes, Keane, Peter Horsfield.

Referred: J Winter (Stockton-on-Tees).

TODAY'S FA CUP FIFTH ROUND MATCHES



Arsenal v Sheffield United



ARSENAL HAVE paid a heavy price for having so many players involved in Wednesday's international at Wembley. Tony Adams will be rested even though a scan has dispelled fears that he may have broken his nose in the game against France, while Martin Keown is out for three weeks after pulling a hamstring. Lee Dixon, the third Gunner in England's back line, was carried off with concussion and is still troubled by a neck injury.

Emmanuel Petit starts a three-match ban and with Matthew Upson doubtful with a groin injury the holders could have Gilles Grimandi and Steve Bould in central defence. Nigerian striker Nwankwo Kanu may be on the bench after receiving his work permit. Nelson Vivas looks set to replace Dixon at right-back with Stephen Hughes taking over from Petit in midfield. Fredrik Ljungberg (ankle) and Luis Boa Morte (knee) are still out.

Sheffield United have Wayne Quinlan back from suspension.

Midfielder player Curtis Woodhouse, Paul Devlin and David Holdsworth should be given the all-clear after undergoing treatment for minor knocks, but there is a doubt over Roger Nilsen who will undergo a fitness test on a hamstring problem.

ARSENAL (from): Seaman, Vivas, Grimandi, Bould, Upon, Winterburn, Parkes, Viera, Hughes, Overmars, Bergkamp, Anelka, Kanu, Okwara, Gade, Manning, Lee, Dixon, Petit, Quinlan, Nwankwo, Kanu, Ljungberg, Boa Morte, Woodhouse, Twiss, Devlin, Stuart, Nilsen, Morris, Ford, Anderson, Henry, Tracy.

Suspensions: Arsenal, Petit.

Referred: P Jones (Loughborough).

Barnsley v Bristol Rovers



BARNESLEY STRIKER Mike Sheron could make his debut after finally recovering from a hamstring injury following his £1m move from Queen's Park Rangers last month. The availability of the much-travelled Sheron will be especially welcome as fellow forward Mike Turner is Cup-tied and former Wolves striker Don Goodman is still struggling with his own hamstring problem.

Adic Moses and Darren Sheridan both return from one-match bans, with the duo likely to be in the starting line-up and on the bench respectively. Craig Hignett should be fit despite a calf injury, while Matt Appleby could come into contention despite a thigh strain which forced him out of last week's 2-2 draw with Crewe.

The Bristol Rovers player-manager, Ian Holloway, will make a late decision over his side. Mike Trouton could get the nod to line up at centre-back for the Second Division side, alongside Steve Foster with Andy Thompson Cup-tied. In midfield, Josh Low, Stephane Leoni and Michael Meaker are vying for one place.

BARNESLEY (from): T Bullock, Eaden, Moses, De Zeeuw, Tinkler, Jones, Appleby, Richardson, Morgan, McCullagh, Hignett, Sheridan, M Bullock, Dyer, Hendrie, Goodman, Marcelli, Rose, Markland, Sheron, Leese.

Bristol Rovers (from): Jones, Pritchard, Challis, Trees, Trouton, Foster, Holloway, Low, Price, Meaker, Curton, Roberts, Leoni.

Suspensions: None.

Referred: A Wilkie (Chester-le-Street).

Everton v Coventry City



THE RETURN of Danny Cadamarteri after suspension gives Everton manager Walter Smith the rare luxury of picking from three strikers. Cadamarteri, 18-year-old Francis Jeffers who made his full debut at Derby last Sunday, and Ibrahima Bakayoko will all be considered.

In defence Marco Materazzi is still suspended and Slaven Bilic and Alex Cleland are long-term injury victims. David Unsworth has been having intensive treatment on a pulled calf muscle that forced him off at half-time in the 2-1 defeat at Derby.

If Unsworth is ruled out, Craig Short could be pushed back into action after seven weeks out with a torn calf although he is not considered fully fit yet. Smith is likely to revert to a 4-4-2 formation with veteran Dave Watson lining up alongside Richard Dunne and Michael Ball.

George Boateng and David Burrows return to Coventry's team after one-match suspensions and new Bosnian signing Mo Konje is set to make his full debut following his £2m transfer from Monaco. Paul Williams is out with a hamstring injury.

EVERTON (from): Mythe, Ward, Unsworth, Short, Watson, Dunn, Ball, Dacourt, Hutchinson, Embrey, Cadamarteri, Jeffers, Bakayoko, Simpson, Morgan, Jeffers, Evans, Lovell, Schindler, Fogarty, Hickey, Whelan, Green, Teffer, Aloisi, Gazzola, Edwards, Quinn, Ogurcov.

Suspensions: Everton, Materazzi.

Referred: U Rennie (Sheffield).

Huddersfield v Derby County



HUDDERSFIELD TOWN'S Welsh international defender Steve Jenkins is out after picking up an ankle injury during last Saturday's defeat at Port Vale which also forced him of the midweek B international against Northern Ireland. Sam Collins (shin splints) is also out, while Gran Johnson is doubtful with a groin problem, with the duo both having missed the Vale Park clash. With a lengthy list of long-term injured, manager Peter Jackson adds Jon Dyer to the squad after a comeback in the reserves this week following a lengthy lay-off with an Achilles problem.

Dean Sturridge is on course to play for Derby after missing two matches with a hamstring pull but fellow striker Paulo Wanchope is definitely out, also with a hamstring injury. If Sturridge is passed fit, he will partner Dean Burton, who scored for Jamaica in midweek following his double against Everton last Sunday. German defender Stefan Schönau is available after serving a one-match ban and midfielder Lars Bohinen has recovered from flu and is back in the squad.

DERBY COUNTY (from): Hoult, Potts, Cartwright, Simms, Lauren, Carter, Edwards, King, Baano, Sturridge, Burton, Harper, Powell, Hunt, Schönau, Bohinen, Elliott, Stewart, Alison, Thorney, Barnes, Heyes, Fahey, Heavy, Dyson, Snodgrass, Edmondson, Ali, Beld.

Suspensions: None.

Referred: G Wallop (Worthing).

And statistics

Are fans still up for the Cup?

AFTER YEARS in the doldrums, the FA Cup's appeal is returning for smaller sides at least. The dwindling support for League football in the Seventies was mirrored in the Cup but until now the upturn in League support in the Nineties - especially in the Premiership - has not reflected in the Cup. Then, last season, average gates rose from 12,200 to 13,200 and that increase has been well maintained this year. Proof of enduring Cup magic has been at smaller clubs - such as Port Vale, Plymouth and Bristol Rovers, which have seen their largest gates of the season for Cup games - but some evidence of footy fatigue can be seen elsewhere, notably at Nottingham Forest, Tottenham and Everton, where Cup games drew the lowest gates of the season.

On the pitch in recent years, performances have shown - perhaps against expectation - that League duels have not unduly affected performances in the Cup. Of the six League and Cup Doubles done this century, three have come since the start of the Premiership. Look at the form of top flight teams in the League and Cup and Manchester United top both tables by a street. Chelsea and Wimbledon have found Cup success in excess of their League form while both Liverpool and Blackburn have disappointed in the Cup.

And the minnows? Five Nationwide clubs enter the fifth round along with 11 Premiership clubs. One minnow, at least, must survive, with Barnsley and Fulham (at Manchester United) have their chance of giant-killing glory. Four Premiership clubs - Southampton, Nottingham Forest and West Ham in the third round and Aston Villa in the fourth round - have already fallen to Nationwide opposition. Fulham are going for their giant-killing hat-trick at the most difficult venue of all. Sheffield United have a recent pedigree: two years ago in the third round, having drawn at Highbury, they defeated the Gunners by a single goal in the Bramall Lane replay, and last year they progressed to the semi-final at the expense of Coventry. Huddersfield have to look much further back for their moment of glory. Twice in the last three seasons they have been knocked out by Wimbledon, but on 7 January 1984 they beat QPR - then riding high in the top flight - 2-1 at home.

Cup record table 1992-99*

Played	Pts	Position on League performance **
1. Manchester United	76	(1)
2. Chelsea	62	(6)
3. Wimbleton	60	(9)
4. Arsenal	57	(3)
5. Leeds	50	(7)
6. Tottenham	49	(10)
7. Sheff Wed	45	(11)
8. Newcastle	41	(8)
9. Aston Villa	40	(5)
10. Liverpool	36	(2)
11. Everton	35	(12)
12. Blackburn	33	(4)
13. Coventry	32	(13)
14. West Ham	31	(15)
15. Man City	28	(16)
16. Nottingham Forest	28	(23)
17. Leicester	19	(21)
20. Southampton	19	(14)
21. Derby	18	(22)
22. Ipswich	17	(24)
23. Oldham	15	(26)
24. QPR	15	(17)
25. Sheffield United	13	(25)
26. Norwich	13	(19)
27. Barnsley	11	(23)
28. Bolton	9	(27)
29. Sunderland	7	(28)
30. Swindon	1	(30)
31. Charlton	0	(31)

*Cup position calculated on absolute number of points where a win is worth three points and a draw one point.
**Calculated on absolute number of points accumulated in the Premiership between the start of the 1992-93 season and now. For example Manchester United are top with 548 points from 265 games, West Ham are 15th with 284 points from 222 games and Charlton are 31st with 20 points from 24 games.

Cup magic!

Date	Game	Gate	Highest League gate	"Cup magic" factor
3 Jan	Port Vale v Liverpool	16,557	10,465	+6,092
4 Jan	Preston v Arsenal	21,099	15,888	+5,211
2 Jan	Plymouth v Derby	16,730	11,936	+4,794
23 Jan	Swansea v Derby	11,383	7,757	+3,626
2 Jan	Bristol City v Everton	19,608	16,257	+3,351
13 Jan	Fulham v Southampton	17,448	14,284	+3,164
2 Jan	Lincoln v Sunderland	10,408	7,338	+3,070
23 Jan	Plymouth v Leeds	18,854	17,022	+1,842
23 Jan	Bristol Rovers v L Orient	9,274	7,529	+1,745

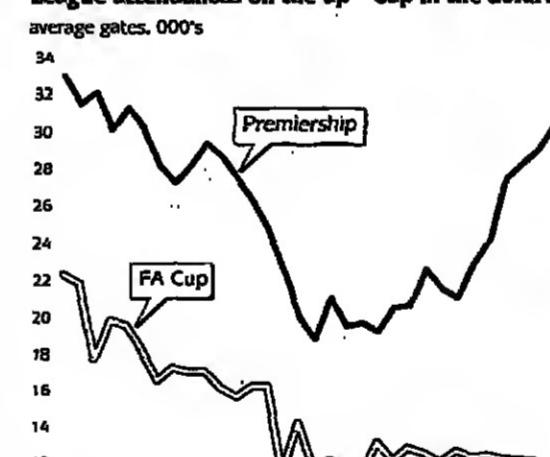
Cup tragic?

Date	Game	Gate	Lowest	Shortfall League gate
2 Jan	N Forest v Portsmouth	10,092	21,362	-11,270
2 Jan	Blackburn v Charlton	16,631	22,544	-5,913
19 Jan	Barnsley v Swindon	10,510	15,115	-4,605
2 Feb	Tottenham v Wimbleton	24,049	28,338	-4,289
2 Jan	Coventry v Macclesfield	14,197	16,006	-1,809
2 Jan	Southampton v Fulham	12,549	14,354	-1,805
23 Jan	Everton v Ipswich	28,854	30,357	-1,503
3 Jan	Sheff Wed v Norwich	18,737	19,321	-584
2 Jan	Wimbleton v Man City	11,226	11,717	-491
2 Jan	Crewe v Oxford	4,207	4,489	-282

Peter Schmeichel,
the last line in
Manchester
United's defence
against Fulham
tomorrow



League attendances on the up - Cup in the doldrums



20th Century League and Cup Doubles

Tottenham
1960-1961
1970-1971
Arsenal
1986-1988
Liverpool
1993-1994
Manchester United
1995-1996
Manchester United
1997-1998
Arsenal

Nationwide sides reaching the FA Cup
fifth round 1992-93

1992-93: 6
1993-94: 9
1994-95: 3
1995-96: 6
1996-97: 7
1997-98: 5

Statistics: Brian Sears/Nick Harris

Sheff Wed v Chelsea

SPORT

THORNLEY'S CUP GOAL P30 • FRAN COTTON'S RUGBY VISION P21

Wilkinson stays until summer

HOWARD WILKINSON is set to continue as caretaker England coach until the summer when the Football Association will attempt to entice Kevin Keegan or Alex Ferguson to take the job permanently.

This would mean Wilkinson taking charge for the crucial European Championship qualifiers against Poland on 27 March, and probably Sweden and Bulgaria in June. He would then hope to hand over a team with a good chance of qualifying for the finals to be held in the Netherlands and Belgium next year.

FOOTBALL
BY GLENN MOORE

Wilkinson kept the public and the bookies guessing yesterday as the promised plume of smoke above his Lancaster Gate office failed to emerge. Instead a smoke-screen was released in the form of a statement which sought hush before he revealed his decision on whether to go for the post of national coach full-time.

However, it failed to obscure Wilkinson's belief, shared by

senior FA figures, that the job he is doing as technical director is too important to relinquish.

Wilkinson had a lengthy meeting with Noel White, the chairman of the FA's International Committee, said they had discussed "the current situation at the FA in the context of the recent restructuring proposals largely put forward by Wilkinson" being put forward within the FA.

"These proposals concern the integration of all professional and international football within the FA. Their implementation and the selec-

tion of the right person for the England coach are crucial if England are to become the world's best."

"The rush to make a decision, any decision, must not be allowed to force compromises to have to be made. These decisions will affect football in this country for the next 10 years."

"As a result of our discussions it is expected that an announcement will be made next week concerning the situation taking us through to June."

That announcement, which is likely to confirm Wilkinson's role until June, has been

delayed by the need to have it ratified by other members of the sub-committee responsible for appointing Glenn Hoddle's successor. This is why Wilkinson added: "Given my position within the FA it would not be appropriate at this time to make public my personal decision in respect of the position of England coach."

Both Keegan, the chief operating officer of Fulham, and Ferguson, the Manchester United manager, have heavy commitments to the end of this season.

The first is the FA Cup fifth-

round meeting between their clubs at Old Trafford tomorrow. The FA hope that Fulham will gain promotion, or United win the European Cup, and thus make it easier to prise the architect of such success away. Should both refuse to be lured, and Keegan is regarded as the more likely to accept despite his recent denials of interest, candidates such as Roy Hodgson and, in the short term, Bobby Robson, will re-enter the frame.

Wilkinson, a former Notts County, Sheffield Wednesday and Leeds manager, was

appointed caretaker within an hour of Hoddle's departure last week. He took charge of England's disappointing friendly with France on Wednesday which ended with a 2-0 defeat after Wilkinson had just three days coaching a squad that had been chosen by Hoddle.

As technical director Wilkinson has been responsible for pushing through the Charter for Quality which deals with the coaching and playing of football from eight-year-olds to the national team. Initiatives include the nationwide youth academy system, the creation of a na-

tional football centre, and the establishment of a coaches' association involving more extensive training and regular retraining of coaches at all levels.

Lawrie McMenemy, the Northern Ireland manager, yesterday claimed Keegan had all the credentials to become England coach, but then ruled him out for now because of his present position at Fulham.

"Kevin has all the attributes with the added bonus of having had a supreme career. But the timing, if they offered it to him this weekend, is wrong."

Football, pages 27 to 31

Charlton help other clubs over sabotage

CHARLTON WILL provide evidence to other Premier League clubs to ensure the electronic sabotage which threatened their game against Liverpool has not been copied.

The Addicks have checked their floodlight system at The Valley after it was tampered with, leading to four arrests in connection with an alleged Far Eastern betting ring. Charlton are keen to share their experience with other clubs to stop the English game becoming the victim of sabotage which can net gamblers huge rewards on the other side of the globe.

Detectives investigating the alleged plan to blow the lights at The Valley removed electrical equipment from the ground for evidence.

After a series of meetings involving the police and the Premier League, Charlton are ready to play their home game against Liverpool. It goes ahead as planned kick-off 3pm, despite fears that it might be brought forward, or even postponed.

Charlton's managing director, Peter Varney, who has been at the centre of the discussions, said extensive work had been done to rectify the damage caused to the floodlights so the game could go ahead, and the South London club will be liaising closely with other clubs to make sure they have not been hit by floodlight saboteurs.

Varney said: "We will be providing evidence to all other Premier League clubs of how this has been done. If it's been copied at other clubs, they can put that right immediately."

■ Singapore's national league will become the first in Asia to legalise domestic betting when the season opens 31 March. One reason the practice has been restricted is because of fears it will lead to match-fixing and corruption.

Four men, three Malaysians and a member of Charlton's security team, were arrested

BY MATT BARLOW

after a break-in at The Valley's power room on Wednesday when electrical cable was tampered with.

Police believe they may have thwarted a major betting sting involving big-money gambling syndicates based in Malaysia.

Varney added: "Substantial amounts of money have changed hands to bring about the sort of sabotage done to our electrical system. People only do that if they stand to make a huge financial gain from doing that."

Police are already looking into other Premiership matches that have been the victims of floodlight failures in recent seasons. Games at West Ham, Wimbledon and Derby have all been blacked out and a game at Manchester United was delayed last month when the lights failed.

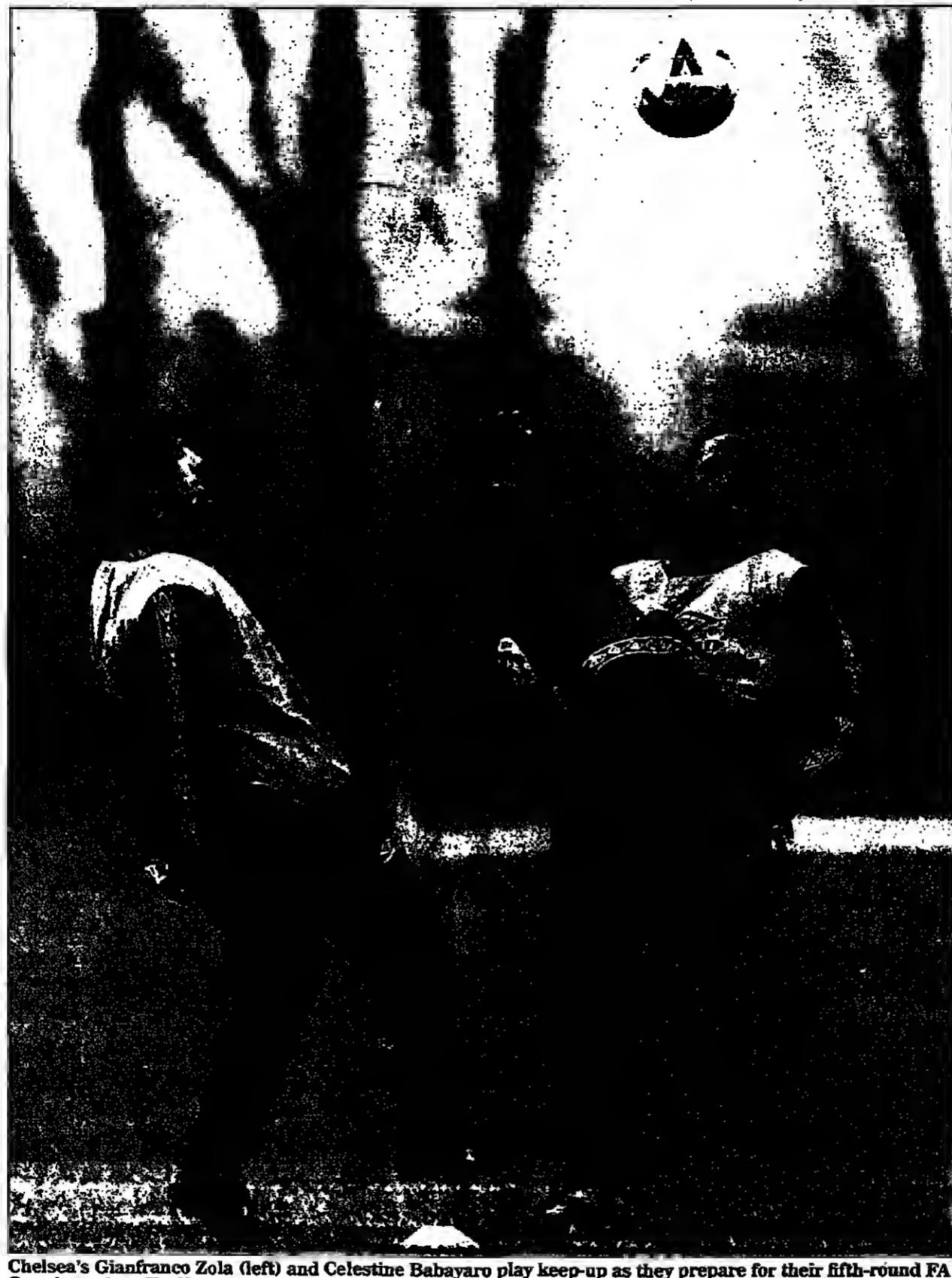
Varney said Charlton had acted quickly in the best interests of the club even though this could have meant changing the kick-off time for the Liverpool game.

It was important for Charlton that the match went ahead, as they could steal a march on their relegation rivals on this FA Cup fifth round weekend if they could overcome Liverpool. Nottingham Forest, who travel to West Ham, are the only other strugglers in League action.

Varney said: "It's been a hectic few days for us all at the club but we're delighted to go ahead with the match as planned."

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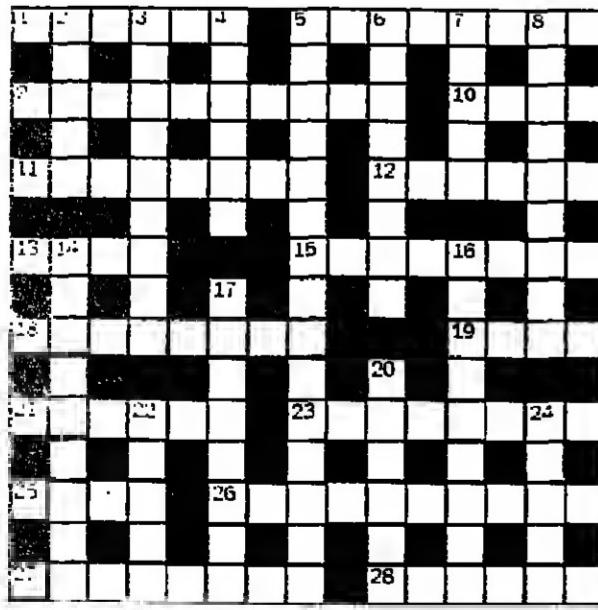


Chelsea's Gianfranco Zola (left) and Celestine Babayaro play keep-up as they prepare for their fifth-round FA Cup tie against Sheffield Wednesday at Hillsborough today

Action Images

THE SATURDAY CROSSWORD

No. 2845 Saturday 13 February by Spurius



ACROSS

- 1 Alternative route around eastern Thailand, some what hard (6)
- 5 Article penned by hardened person in charge of a line of soldiers (9)
- 9 Scatter-scholarly bully (6,4)
- 10 Burden on old star's back (4)
- 11 Secular poem incorrectly rendered in translation by a student (8)
- 12 Fellow originally expressing thought, for example, about security (6)
- 13 Sound system provided in Hawaii (2,2)
- 15 State endless dbt's about to produce? (8)
- 18 Natural material used in manufacture of pink bowl (8)
- 19 Emblem German left out, as ordered (4)
- 21 Fit clubs into oew cases (6)
- 23 Firm associated with smart little buzzer (8)
- 25 Request from couple accepted (4)
- 26 Complaint from husband initially somewhat immature, perhaps (10)
- 27 When kind, journalist appears different (8)
- 28 Very keen to wield the rod? (3-3)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive handbacked copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5SL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your name and postcode. Last week's winners: P Bowtell, Crewe; T Screen, Alresford; J Williams, Shrewsbury; M Stokes, Clifton; V Riley, Cheadle Hulme.

DOWN

- 2 "Weather" poem written after some hesitation (5)
- 3 An aficionado of Graves, among others? (9)
- 4 Horsemen one's seen in quaint dress (5)
- 5 Safety measures necessary for roundabout way to the Bank of England? (6,4)
- 6 Loose mm's fate, really horrible (8)
- 7 Billiard shot popular with old fellows (2,3)
- 8 Majority hold out for improvement after notice is given (9)
- 14 In which some, though not all, members are equal? (9)
- 16 Corrupted daughter putting on strange black vesture (9)
- 17 Sharp end of clipper? (8)
- 18 Uplifting English musical about maiden runs for a season (8)
- 22 Time to find poetic inspiration (5)
- 24 Rope very big officer's abandoned on the way up (5)

Graveney wants an 'upbeat' England

BY DAVID FIELD
in Melbourne

AS RAIN swept in for the first time in Melbourne since Boxing Day, the second game of the Carlton & United Series final was washed out on Thursday night, and was due to start in the early hours of this morning.

If England win the second match against Australia to level the final at 1-1, the sides will have to meet again in a deciding tie tomorrow, an especially hectic conclusion for the players in the party who were also involved in the Ashes leg of the tour.

"I've stressed the point to all

of them that they have got to get back to the way they responded in the 'league matches.'

"We had a meeting as a whole group and we reaffirmed that we've got to look forward and not back. Australia will certainly want us to feel the impact of losing in that manner.

"It was a game we threw away, and the disappointment becomes very acute. Having lost the match as we did, the best cure is to get out there and play. It's no good kicking your heels."

"There was just a slightly dif-

ferent atmosphere for that game in Sydney, because we were in the finals as opposed to a play-off situation.

"We had a meeting as a whole group and we reaffirmed that we've got to look forward and not back. Australia will certainly want us to feel the impact of losing in that manner.

"It was a game we threw away, and the disappointment becomes very acute. Having lost the match as we did, the best cure is to get out there and play. It's no good kicking your heels."

"On Thursday night, the

IN MONDAY'S NEW 12-PAGE SPORTS SECTION

"I've lost nearly two stone in the last year. Why? Dunno. Certain amount of stress, possibly"

WILL CARLING TALKS TO
RICHARD WILLIAMS



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Saturday 13 February 1999 Registered as a newspaper with the Post Office

WEEKEND REVIEW

COMMENT • ARTS & BOOKS • COUNTRY & GARDEN • TRAVEL



RUSHDIE'S
UNFUNNY
VALENTINE

ESSAY, PAGE 7



WHAT JOHN
LE CARRE
DID NEXT

BOOKS, PAGE 15



WILD BOAR:
ON THE LOOSE
IN KENT?

COUNTRY, PAGE 18



ISLE OF LOVE:
HONEYMOON
IN MAURITIUS

TRAVEL, PAGE 19

Sex, adventure, places, writing – these are the ingredients of romance. Not for English men, though. From Lord Byron to Nick Drake, the great English Romantic has been an effete, narcissistic poseur, neutered by his own blankness

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for votes case

What do you expect from Romance? The sweep of a cloak, the sound of hooves, the lap of waves against a gondola, the spiral of smoke from blown-out candles, the first kiss in a shadowed hallway... Just don't expect it from Englishmen. For the concept of "romantic" has long taken root in the English soul as being little to do with tender passions.

"Romance" has several meanings: the major connotation is of course "a happy but short-lived affair". Other connotations are "a spirit of or inclination for adventure, excitement or mystery", and "a mysterious, exciting, sentimental or nostalgic quality associated with a place"; and lastly, "literary narratives that deal with events and characters remote from ordinary life".

So that's romance: sex, adventure, places and writing. The trouble with Romantic Englishmen is that they take too literally the second, third and fourth, and tend to downgrade the first. They'd rather get into scrapes, travel, write and move on than behave like eligible partners. From Lord Byron to Bruce Chatwin, the line exhibits consistent but puzzling characteristics. There seem to be five main characteristics of the Romantic Englishman: he went to a good school, he has unruly hair, he writes a bit, he is always in transit, and some people think he's homosexual.

BY JOHN WALSH

Take his most recent embodiments, Joe Fiennes and Richard E Grant. Both actors emotive spectacles, they're all eyes and mouth. Mr Grant, playing the Scarlet Pimpernel, did his habitual mad gleam and sharky grin. Mr Fiennes, playing Will Shakespeare in *Shakespeare in Love*, does the brimming pools and open-mouthed astonishment that are his joint trademark. But as men of action, they both leave much to be desired.

Watching Fiennes scampering through Elizabethan London, asleep at his desk or supine in the theatre circle, you feel you're watching a spindly, art-shop marionette, a perplexed Giacometti sculpture come to life. Grant, as Sir Percy Blakeney, metamorphoses from a foppish, longue-twirling court popinjay to a dashing, Paris-bound, blade-twirling Zorro of the Tuilleries; but he doesn't quite make it. Confronted by Chauvelin's secret police, he does a lot of prancing about, shouting "Take that, you brute", and engaging in fistfights, but always suggesting he'd be happier in the gym at Harrow, giving his fag a gentlemanly drubbing.

Of course, the parts they're playing are writers. Shakespeare is a world-class stealer of other people's ideas for his plays, and the Pimpernel is a sub-Oscar epigrammatist and composer of "They seek him here" doggerel. Writing is mandatory for Romantic Englishman. For English sensibilities, there's no romance without composition and, preferably, publication – love as Dedication and Acknowledgements. "If you read a lot of travel books," a woman friend told me, wistfully, "you'd be surprised how many acknowledgements there are to women 'in whose house I spent a profitable three months', after which, presumably, the author took his manuscript, his conversation and his attenuated passion off to another house and another Muse." In the real "Romance" countries, the language of wooing and seduction is urgent, rhetorical and personal; for the Romantic Englishman, it's tentative, measured and probably about the mating habits of the Hopi tribespeople.

Public schools, travel and writing seem an inescapable troika of requirements for the Romantic Englishman. Start with Byron, who went to Harrow, and Shelley (Eton), and you're pitched in a maelstrom of sexual irregularity, restless trav-



**Who do you
love?**

eling through Europe and precocious literary activity. In more recent times, the restlessly-travelling British dreamboat has rarely been to a secondary-modern in Streatham: Bruce Chatwin went to Marlborough, Colin Thubron went to Eton, as did Robin Hanbury-Tenison and Mark McCrum, while Willie Dalrymple went to Ampleforth. Looking at the places they inspect - Dalrymple went to India, McCrum to South Africa, Australia and Ireland - they seem like the grandsons of empire, casting a puzzled eye over what had become of the former colonies and dominions.

Or they become expatriate exotics. Two of the most glamorous Englishmen I've ever met, William Riviere and James Hamilton-Paterson, both travellers and writers, lived in the foothills of Umbria, each by himself; they rarely met. Hamilton-Paterson existed without electricity or plumbed-in water, wrote the brilliant *Gerontius* in six weeks and spent half of each year among the pirates of the Philippines; Riviere lived less frugally, wrote exquisitely impressionistic novels, affected a walking cane and a hat and entertained friends in London, at the Travellers Club.

Romantic Englishmen have always got to be elsewhere. Their watchword, whether they know the song or not, is "I'm the type of boy who is always on the road/ Wherever I lay my hat, that's my home". In America you get Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady travelling and writing prose as an expression of macho individuality; for Englishmen, it's leaving home in order to bring the world back.

It's extraordinary how many exponents of the genre write books about their RE predecessors. Thus Charles Nicholl, intrepid adventurer of *The Fruit Palace*, wrote about the life and death of Christopher Marlowe, a classically dangerous, restless, sexually dubious RE. Thus Patrick Freoch, the camp, jellaba-clad biographer of Frances Youngusband, the Victorian explorer, soldier, mystic and lover. Robert McCrum, the publisher, Observer literary editor and elder brother of Mark, wrote a novel called *The Romantic Englishman* in a triumphant feat of self-identification. Nicholas Shakespeare, who grew up in Peru as a diplomat's son, went to Winchester and has only recently returned from a long trek in India, is shortly to bring out a biography of Bruce Chatwin, the doyen of travellers, forever bounding across the globe from Patagonia to the Sahara, collecting exotic and jewelled objects while gradually turning himself into one. For the women (and men) in his life Chatwin was unplannable in a way that's typical of the RE: you could have him for a while, like a beautiful possession, but sooner or later you had to relinquish possession to someone else.

Travel writers apart, you can find the Romantic Englishman popping up in the music world. Nick Drake, who killed himself aged 26, was a sad-eyed, Shelleyan, Marlowe-educated visionary with a deep, melodic English singing line. It was assumed that he never had an emotional relationship with anyone, but the girls are starting to come out of the woodwork. A (female) singer-songwriter called Robin Frederick writes, in this month's *Mojo*, about how "Nick would appear at odd hours of the night at my flat. I'd let him in and we'd pass the time playing songs for each other. He stared at the wall, or the floor, or into the fire. Falling in love with Nick was a no-brainer, and I promptly did. He was extraordinarily attractive and that, plus his natural quietness, made it easy to weave a web of fantasies around him".

Continued on page 2

A cameo of Romantics, clockwise from top: Byron, Leslie Howard, Joe Fiennes, Nicholas Shakespeare, Shelley, Colin Thubron, Bruce Chatwin, Nick Drake, Keith Richards, Robert McCrum, Ralph Fiennes, Rupert Brooke. Centre, Dennis Price as Lord Byron

INSIDE	Letters	2	Obituaries	10-11	Country & Garden	17-18	Miscellany	29
	Leaders and comment	3-7	12-13	Travel	19-27	Sunday TV	31	
	Features	8-9	Books	14-16	Voice Personals	28	Today's TV	32

SEVEN PAGES OF
TRAVEL

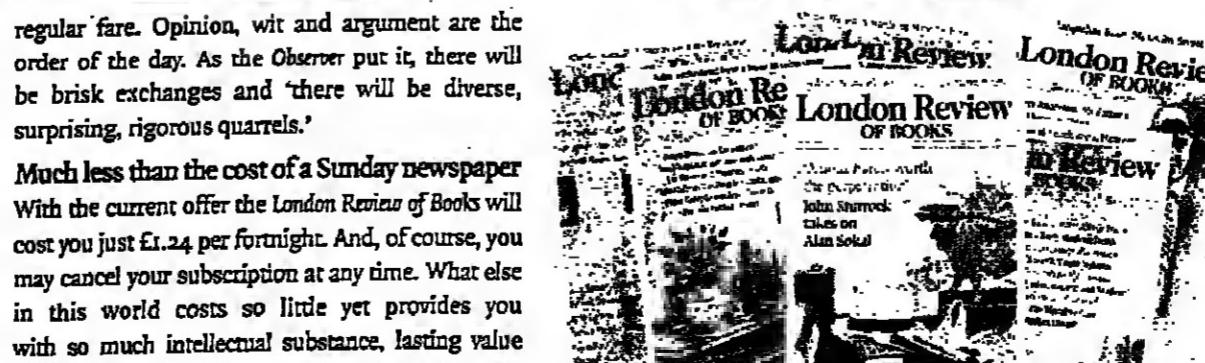
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TOMORROW IN
THE INDEPENDENT
ON SUNDAY
REVIEW



How £12,000 turned
Jonathan Rendall into
a man possessed

REAL LIFE



Marianne Jean-Baptiste
on race, children and
playing Doreen Lawrence



"It is 24 years since I
started an affair with one
of my students ... and it
still hasn't finished"

CULTURE



What do scientists know
about love? Natasha Walter
on Valentine's day

PLUS
Chris Patten's diary



Winter in Moscow No 6: To supplement their meagre diet, unemployed men fish for carp through holes cut in the ice on the Moskva river

Andy Johnstone

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5DL and include a daytime telephone number, fax to 0171 293 2056 or e-mail to letters@independent.co.uk (e-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address). Letters may be edited for length and clarity

Driven to hunt

Sir: Sadly, hunt followers in four-wheel-drive vehicles are not confined to the South Downs (letter, 10 February). We experienced a similar phenomenon on Exmoor last year. But there, because there are many rural tracks which connect, it is possible for the cars continually to drive round in circles attempting to catch sight of the hunt.

We set off with our children for a three-quarter mile stroll down an unmetalled track to a remembered peaceful picnic spot by the river Barle. The first sign that all was not as it should be was a group of three motorbikes that repeatedly cast around and up and down the hillside. Then, an increasing roar signalled the progress along the track of 10 four-wheel-drives. We bugged the hedge while they passed, then plodded on. Half a mile further, having completed their circuit, they streamed past again. We reached the river and sat down. Vroom – this time three quad bikes raced past just adjacent to the riverbank footpath, pausing only to ask if we had seen the hunt.

Deciding that this was not the place to be, we packed up ready to walk back up the hill. Briefly, we were passed by the huntsmen and hounds themselves. As we coaxed the children back up the track we were again ousted by the motorised entourage.

The track, which years ago had been an easy walk used by

pedestrians, horses and sheep, was now rutted and churned up.

JOANNE WELCH
MICHAEL SILVERLEAF
London SES

Sir: The vast majority of 4x4 owners who use byways do so responsibly; they have a self-imposed code of conduct, which includes staying away from byways whose surface is damaged and needs time to recover. Voluntary restraint notices, which are seen as a grown-up alternative to Traffic Regulation Orders, are posted in consultation with county councils, and are adhered to by all but the

inevitable, irresponsible minority who exist in every walk of life.

It is saddening to see Duff Hart-Davis (Country Matters, 6 February) resorting to the age-old emotive language of the anti-4x4 lobby, saying they "churn green lanes, bridleways and footpaths into a morass". Recreational off-roaders simply do not drive on footpaths or bridleways: to do so is against the law. Of the very few rights of way that are open to vehicles, only a tiny number are prone to excessive surface damage.

In my experience, intransigence on both sides can be put down to one factor: greed. That is what causes a small number of 4x4 owners to use the countryside without any regard for others. Likewise, it is the real reason for people wanting to ban them. Mr Hart-Davis doesn't want to share his own personal bucolic idyll with others whose presence offends him.

ALAN KIDD
Cowden, Kent

What FO policy?

Sir: For Anne McElvoy (Comment, 10 February) to write that British foreign policy towards Sierra Leone wasn't right and didn't work misses the point. There is no clearly articulated policy regarding Sierra Leone.

The most urgent need is a clear statement of policy towards Sierra Leone from the British government.

The ethical issue is clear: This matter is about the future of the ballot box in West Africa – do we support the democratically elected President Kabah and give democratic government a chance to take root or, through inaction or procrastination, allow a bloody and futile civil war to rage?

The rebels have their backers – Liberia and, reportedly mercenaries and arms from Ukraine. The rebels have no political programme and no desire to engage in the democratic process. They are murderous thugs who kill their own

groups. In Germany, where a similar policy applies, this is exactly what has happened.

Political refugees are not, for the most part, bogus or "economic migrants". They are the consequence of arms exports from the developed world, and Britain is the world's second biggest arms producer. The Government's "ethical" foreign policy allows profits from arms sales to continue but seeks to keep out their human debris.

TONY GREENSTEIN
Brighton Unemployed Centre

Sir: One of the tests of the Immigration and Asylum Bill currently before Parliament is its effect on the most vulnerable – children. The UK so far has not agreed to give special protection to child refugees or asylum seekers as stipulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The introduction of this Bill is an opportunity to do so.

MARIE STAUNTON
Deputy Director
UNICEF UK
London WC2

Refugee targets

Sir: The decision by the Home Secretary to deprive refugees seeking political asylum of their right to social security benefits is shameful. Ministers have decided that political refugees make an easy and populist target as the economic weather turns stormy.

Refugees will be prevented from becoming integrated into British society. Without money you cannot be part of normal everyday society. The decision also has major implications for all other social security claimants. If refugees can live on food stamps and vouchers, what is there to stop this principle being extended to anyone who is unemployed or unwaged?

We also condemn the attempt to disperse refugees. When my grandparents, and most other Jewish immigrants, came to Britain, they headed for the East End of London or the industrial cities of the North. Today's refugees also want to be with their own communities. To forcibly disperse people, on pain of losing the right to basic sustenance, will isolate those who are already traumatised and leave them as a target for attack by fascist and racist

groups. In Germany, where a similar policy applies, this is exactly what has happened.

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MARIE STAUNTON
Deputy Director
UNICEF UK
London WC2

Secret polluters

Sir: Richard Cormack (letter, 10 February) should focus his concern north of the border. The real scandal is not *The Independent's* headline, which treated pollution figures for England and Wales as applying to the whole of Britain, but that similar information on emissions from factories cannot be made available to those living in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

People throughout the UK should have the right to know about who is releasing pollution into their area and what the potential health impacts might be. Currently, accessing most pollution information in Scotland is complicated, time consuming and expensive. In some cases the figures are either not available or not even collected. Easy public access to environmental information is key if we are to have environmental justice in Scotland. Friends of the Earth Scotland supports the aims of Matthew Taylor MP's

If every vehicle halves its speed, it will take twice as long to complete its journey: hence road occupancy will double and our roads will become twice as congested. Crossing the road will therefore become harder, not easier, in most urban and suburban areas.

In any case, our society depends for its wealth and stability upon constant economic expansion through improved communications: to hamstring it through artificial restraints would be an act of Luddism and economic folly.

OLIVER HOWARTH
Wolverhampton, West Midlands

IN BRIEF

Sir: The account of the shooting down of Amy Johnson which you published on 6 February ("Amy Johnson, my part in her downfall") said that Amy Johnson's aircraft was contacted by radio and a request was made for the colours of the day. She was said to have given the wrong signal twice. In fact Amy Johnson was flying a transatlantic flight for Air Transport Auxiliary. Ferry pilots did not have radio. Amy Johnson was known to be lost and running out of fuel. If she had had radio, she would have been alerting anyone who heard her for help.

PENELOPE DENT
London N19

Sir: How amusing to read Richard Dawkins' "bluffer's guide" to the penal substitutionary theory of atonement (letter, 9 February). There is some evidence here of a first-rate theological mind, though also concern about a fundamentalist strain in his thinking. Further reading could be of help (I should be happy to supply a list); but since, in the current jargon of pastoral care, we are asked to "get alongside people where they are", perhaps Professor Dawkins could start with *The Ladybird Book of Jesus*. It would represent a considerable advance.

The Rev JOHN SWARBRICK
Maidenhead, Berkshire

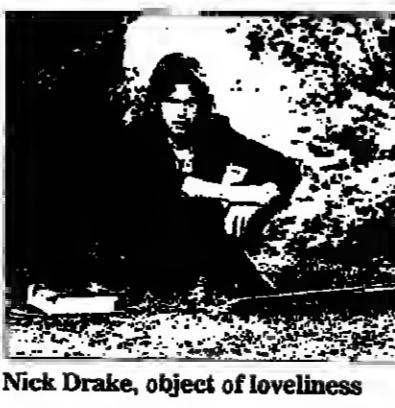
Who does the English Romantic really love?

Continued from page 1

Ms Frederick has put her finger on something here: the damned elusiveness of the Romantic Englishman and the central blankness into which would-be attachments can pour their desires.

Drake's depression has been attributed by some to his latent homosexuality; another recurring element in the RE profile. Confusingly, for the women in their lives, many Romantic Englishmen are quite amazingly cleft. Baroness Orczy, author of the *Finnyernel* stories, took one look at the Anglo-Hungarian Leslie Howard and decided he was just too limp-

wristed to play Sir Percy; Eliot Chase, the romantic lead in Noel Coward's *Private Lives*, and a byword in male sophistication, weds his ex-wife back from her new husband by the rhetoric of love, but is not above saying: "If [your husband] comes near me, I'll scream the place down." Female fans of Colin Thubron have gazed at his thrilling physiognomy, as their forebears once gazed at Rupert Brooke's, and sadly concluded he must be gay (wrong in both cases). Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones, a Romantic Englishman to millions of both sexes, can come across as the hard-as-nails, two-fisted



Nick Drake, object of loveliness

roughneck one moment, and the next become the figure who used to wear Anita Pallenberg's silk blouses, and recently fell off a ladder while languidly reaching for a volume of Leonardo prints.

It's very confusing. But the word "elite" comes from the Latin *erexit*, and means "exhausted by childbirth", or by creativity. So if you're the kind of chap who writes, composes and turns himself into an object of loveliness, a little camp exhaustion is only to be expected. After spending the 19th century building an empire, establishing trade links with the far world, industrialising the nation and

fighting the Russians, you could forgive the English for wanting, as the pinnacle of their ambitions, some quiet, reflective episodes in exotic locations.

There's something classically narcissistic about the Romantic Englishman. He doesn't need women, though he likes their company. He doesn't want to be detained by their desires. He is happier being on the move, constantly en route between one destination and the next, inspecting the world for images of himself, which he then writes about with his educated, golden pen. Women may be allowed to fulfil the function of Muse, but

their Echo-like desire for the self-absorbed Narcissus won't make him turn his face towards them, away from the mirror in which he regards himself.

It's a tough break falling in love with an RE, as Caroline Lamb or Harriet Shelley (or Anne Catherwood, or Lady Marguerite Blakeney) could have told you. They're always somewhere else, somewhere under a post-colonial sun, squatting at the horizon, one hand on hip, choosing an adjective, dreaming of glory. You may get a jewelled Egyptian scarab out of it, or a 1,000-year-old egg. Or a place in the next page of acknowledgements.

THE INDEPENDENT

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Mr Clinton's next trial is to prove he is a world leader

THANK GOODNESS it is all over. A year ago, President Clinton looked bruised, vulnerable, truculent and earnest. After going through the wringer of investigation, trial and acquittal, he looks, well, bruised, vulnerable, truculent and earnest. It is most odd. The full weight of the American constitution has borne down on Mr Clinton. The high-rise moralising of the American and world media has toppled over on him. And he has emerged from the cyclone like Dorothy at the end of *The Wizard of Oz*, back at home behind the white picket fence.

Nothing much has changed, except that Mr Clinton is more popular now than a year ago. The American economy has continued to defy the laws of both gravity and economics, and the President has continued to take the credit for Alan Greenspan's shrewd management.

But important lessons have been learned. Journalists, and not just in the United States, have discovered that voters are quite capable of deciding, if they are given the facts, that a politician can be flawed and still be good at his job. And they were certainly given the facts. However, although journalists may have contributed to the hysteria preceding the successive waves of salacious revelation, they were not responsible for the revelations themselves. It was the President himself who caused the gross invasion of his own and Monica Lewinsky's privacy. If he had only pleaded the Fifth Amendment – the right not to incriminate himself – in the Paula Jones case, he would not have lied about his affair with the intern. With the arrogance of power, he could not have foreseen that he would be tripped up by a caricature Nemesis called Tripp. But in the end, knowing more than any of them could reasonably have wanted to know, the American people decided none of it mattered.

Their verdict was transmitted through the machinery of the constitution, which may not be as good as American patriots think it is, but which is never the less a magnificent democratic construction. The case against the President was more than fully aired and the right result was achieved: Mr Clinton was humiliated and embarrassed, but endorsed as chief executive.

As a result, the Republican party has learnt something too, although it is too shell-shocked to know what it is. The one person who seems to have learnt nothing is Kenneth Starr, whom Mrs Malaprop might have described as the "independent persecutor". Yesterday's vote may not be, of course, the absolute end of the story because Mr Starr shows every sign of wanting to bring criminal charges against his quarry in the ordinary courts. It is not clear whether he can do this while Mr Clinton is still in office, but as Mr Starr's commission lasts for one year after the President leaves office, he will certainly be able to do it then.

Mr Starr's coda apart, though, the world can breathe a sigh of relief and turn to more important matters. Mr Clinton has a world to lead and a place in history to secure. And it is in foreign policy that he needs to work hardest in order to make up for lost time. For, although the agonies and distractions of the impeachment process have had surprisingly few ill effects in domestic affairs, damage has been done to America's moral authority abroad. In particular, Mr Clinton bombed an aspirin factory in the suburbs of Khartoum in order to draw attention away from his broadcast admission, two days before, of a relationship with Ms Lewinsky that was



"not appropriate" and "wrong". That was inexcusable, and it is noticeable that no evidence has since been produced to substantiate the claim that it was making chemical weapons. Not in America, and not here, despite the British Government's fulsome support for the bombing. It was illegal, but it was also a big tactical error, because it will have fuelled the sense of Arab Muslim grievance against the US and its allies – the sense of grievance which inspires the same fundamentalist terrorists against whom the bombing was aimed.

Now, though, Mr Clinton has the chance to look forward over the next two years and to redeem himself as the last 20th-century president. There is bound to be a worry that he only operates well – and when he operates well, he is undoubtedly a brilliant politician – when

he is under pressure. He may be tempted to relax into an extended transition to an Al Gore presidency. For the sake of a world which could see the rule of law increasingly take the place of the superpower rivalries which once held sway, it is to be hoped that Mr Clinton feels the goad of the historian's pen in the small of his back. Peace, human rights and a sustainable ecology require an attentive leader of the most powerful nation.

He cannot escape the fate of being the president who brought the Oval Office into bawdy ridicule. But now that he has been acquitted, he has the chance to add to that the distinction of being the first president to emerge strengthened from impeachment, and the first to translate the high ideals of the American constitution, which in the end served him well, into international law.

Slush, mush and an orgy of marketing

HE IS listed in Butler's *Lives of Patron Saints* in between Ubald, patron saint for protection from dog bites, rabies or hydrophobia, and Venantius, patron saint against danger from falling, or jumping and leaping. It would make just as much sense, theologically, historically and superstitiously, for card printers and helium-filled balloon-makers to sell "beware of the dog" paraphernalia on 18 May. Or "mind the gap" paraphernalia on 18 May.

But no. Slush, mush, and a cheap synthetic imitation of romantic love have made St Valentine the commercial success story of the coldest month. The doubtful legacy of at least two separate saints called Valentine, who are both alleged to have died on 14 February, has been fed into the homogenising machine of modern capitalism for creating popular culture. Valentine has been extruded in much the same way as the equally outmoded history of St Nicholas. Church pleas to recall the inestimable purpose of the Christ Mass in marking the birth of Jesus have been drowned by the racket of toy advertising, which starts long before the day of the patron saint of children on 6 December. The red-jacketed Santa Claus was not, in fact, invented by the Coca-Cola corporation, but he might as well have been. According to Butler's, St Nicholas is also patron saint of brides, unmarried women, pawnbrokers, perfumers, Russians, travellers and sailors – a range of commercial opportunities which remain unexploited so far!

Is nothing sacred? It appears not. Easter is heading the same way, for the purpose of retailing large quantities of chocolate. It is the pagan fertility symbols which get top billing rather than the cross and the stigmata.

As soon as the Xmas'n'New Year double retailing opportunity was over, some supermarkets immediately began displaying Easter eggs – skipping Valentine's Day in their eagerness to hit the next pre-programmed "special occasion".

A calendar based on saint's days has now been reconstructed in a series of artificial festivals celebrated in the temples of mammon. Mother's Day is next. Hallowe'en and Guy Fawkes have increasing potential as a kind of two-for-the-price-of-one bumper special. Supermarkets are even trying to flog turkeys for Thanksgiving and the invented Father's Day is now an established feature. New days for grandparents, siblings and in-laws are in the offing. And this year all this date-ology will end in the consummate silliness of the new millennium.

Yes, we know. All newspapers succumb to the romantic fever in some form (and we too are guilty). But all the same, roll on Monday.

Noteworthy figure

THE BANK OF England is about to produce a £20 note that will feature a likeness of Edward Elgar. This is all wrong. The composer of "Land of Hope and Glory" has been hijacked by those nostalgic for imperial glories, despite valiant efforts to reclaim him for the left. We have an alternative. As it is to be hoped this will be the last new banknote before the euro is adopted, we nominate Adam Smith. Currently adorning the back of Clydesdale Bank's £50 notes, the great Scottish – and British – thinker merits wider recognition for giving liberal free-market economics to the world. May the Hidden Hand move the fuddy-duddies of Threadneedle Street.

Does this modern nation still need a Poet Laureate?

MY FRIEND the poet Brendan Kennelly recalls a relative once asking him what he was working at. Writing poetry, Kennelly replied. "Ah, poetry my arse," replied the relative. It wasn't that he didn't like verse or that he didn't like Brendan. But there were fields to plough, animals to tend to, bills to be paid. The relative poked on Brendan's poetic preoccupation as something of another world.

The fact that the fields and hills of North Kerry, lovelly and stark and memory laden, provided this poet's inspiration did not matter; the fact that Kennelly's poetry did honour to the small farmers and their families, that it spoke of the truth of their lives, did not come into play. Poetry, it was implied, never put food on any man's table. It was stuff for colleges and scholars. Hearing the story, I was tempted to summon up some lines of Patrick Kavanagh's, lines that speak about the drama of small lives set against great events:

"I have lived in important places, times / When great events were decided, who owned / That half a rock, a man's land / Surrounded by our pitchfork-armed claims... / 'Inclined / To lose my faith in Balbray and Gortin, / Till Homer's ghost came whispering to my mind. / He said: I made the Iliad from such / A local row. Gods make their own importance."

I am thinking of poetry, its role and relevance, because of the renewed debate about a Poet Laureate. Twice in the past fortnight, speculation about the Laureateship has graced the grubby pages of the daily press. Now a decent interval has passed since the death of Ted Hughes, the Prime Min-



FERGAL KEANE
*Poetry has always been a threatened creature.
Poets are not literary stars and sell few books*

know what I mean) and – to truly delight New Labour – "relevant". Armitage would be my favourite.

But if the Prime Minister's office is looking for someone who will act as a symbol of a new, inclusive Britain, then they should look no further than Derek Walcott. He is not a Brit but he does belong to the Commonwealth. He is linked in a very definite and tangible way to this island. And he writes of Britain as an insider/outsider; somebody who cherishes the language but who understands the nature of exclusion. Consider *The Bright Field*:

"My nerves steeled against the power of London, I hurried home that evening, with the sense we all have of the crowd's hypocrisy, to feel my rage turned on self-defence, bear energy for the anonymity of every self humbled by massive places, and I who moved against the bitter sea was moved by the light on Underground-bound faces."

Whoever gets the job, there will be inevitable and perhaps unfaltering comparisons with Ted Hughes. Hughes did not produce great public poetry as Laureate. The verses he produced for royal occasions were pleasant, but uninspiring. It was the greater body of his work, his "real" work, which invested the office of Laureate with a craggy nobility. Hughes will cast a long shadow. But to those who say there is no comparable poet in Britain today, I say wait, give it time.

The more fundamental argument is whether we need the Laureateship at all. It goes back to my first point. Is poetry that important, is it relevant enough to our lives to warrant preserving this oafish institution? There is an argument that our culture has fragmented to such a degree that the idea of honouring poetry – in its most conventional sense – is wrong. Why not have a "rock" laureate, a "performance art" laureate? My answer is simple.

Music and art are doing all right. Poetry has always been a threatened creature. With a few notable exceptions, poets live a hand-to-mouth existence. They sell few copies of their books; they travel the length and breadth of the country reading to bored schoolchildren in draughty schools; they are not literary "stars" in the manner of the big novelists or dramatists. It is a tough road.

The poets deserve better. You cannot create a mass market but by maintaining Laureateship you do at least make a statement about the importance of poetry as an art form. It is not a luxury, it is not solely the problems of the high-minded or the intellectual elite. Heaney, Armitage, Walcott speak to us in language that manages to challenge and yet create a strange familiarity.

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Foul play on the sleeper to Fort William

DON'T TALK to me about train journeys from hell. There's no point - you wouldn't get a word in edgeways. I collect nightmare train journeys as other people collect beer-mats and while my sympathy genuinely goes out to the woman who took 18 hours and five changes to get from Macclesfield to Eastbourne last week (though why anyone should choose to make such a *recherché* journey I can't say), compared to my litany of disasters she was joy-riding.

I see ScotRail came out pretty well in the latest rail league tables for punctuality and reliability. Never mind punctuality and reliability, what about availability? It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a harassed mother with a family railcard to book four sleepers to

Fort William. I know because I have been trying to do this for three weeks ever since the fisherman who lives down the road from our holiday house on an island in Loch Linne telephoned to say that our roof was blowing off.

When we started building the house seven years ago, you could jump on the sleeper to Fort William as easily, probably more easily than jumping on a number 11 bus. Now the Aberdeen, Fort William and Inverness sleepers have all been lumped together into one long train which, like the many-headed Hydra, divides somewhere west of Edinburgh in the small hours of the morning leaving just one solitary sleeping car to trundle away to the West Highlands.

It doesn't even have a luggage van anymore. Bicycles, backpacks,



SUE ARNOLD
Even the sheep turned nasty, demanding free champagne with their complimentary dinner

cat-basket - they all have to go into your sleeper with you. None of this matters because taking the sleeper to Fort William has to be one of the

most exhilarating experiences on earth. The discomfort of climbing over two mountain bikes to get to the basin to brush your teeth palls into insignificance when you gaze out of the window at Monassie Gorge or the snow-capped peaks of Aonach Mor.

There it stood at platform one, doors invitingly open, buffet car already full of late-night tipplers. Then came the announcement. The sleeper had been cancelled. We would all be put up at the Station Hotel and flown to London in the morning. Why had it been cancelled? No one seemed to know. There was dark talk of foul play in a siding at Watford Gap. There was darker talk that there simply weren't enough passengers to justify running a whole sleeper to Euston.

All told we numbered around 20 and immediately polarised into two groups: sheep and goats. The sheep said they'd go to the hotel, the goats said they wouldn't. It was now midnight. The hotel would include complimentary dinner, breakfast and use of the gym. The Virgin

spokesman coaxed the goats. "What about women?" someone shouted. The goats stood firm. One of them had telephoned the Watford Gap siding and discovered there was no foul play. Virgin just didn't want to run the train. Temps rose, the kids in the party were curled up on the platform asleep.

Even the sheep were turning nasty, demanding free champagne with their complimentary dinner and free facials in the morning. Never mind facials, what about fulfilling their statutory obligations and getting us to London on the sleeper? shouted the goats.

In the end we compromised. Virgin would take us to London but not on that particular train. No, it wouldn't exactly be a sleeper hut; they would give us free tea and coffee and half-bottles of wine to

make up for any inconvenience. At 2.45am a very old, very shabby train shambled slowly up to platform one. You could see the driver wiping the grime from the windscreen. You could write your name in the dust on the tables. We were issued with blankets, the heating wasn't working, and shortly before 3am we inched our way slowly south out of Glasgow Central.

"I wish you'd all stop knocking Virgin," said a man I know who designs greenhouses. "I took the Virgin cross-country from Haslemere to Leamington Spa the other day and it was brilliant - dead on time, trolley service." Haslemere to Eastbourne? No wonder the Virgin West Coast Line isn't up to scratch. They have just got too much on their plate.

THE SATURDAY PROFILE

RHODRI MORGAN, MP FOR CARDIFF WEST

The clown prince of Wales

THE PROBLEM with Rhodri Morgan is that he has failed the Hyacinth Bucket test in BBC's *Keeping Up Appearances*. Impeccably middle-class he might be, but, unforgivably, he is an intellectual, he is often informally dressed and he is clearly not English - unsurprising, in view of the fact that he is standing for election next Saturday as leader of the Labour Party in Wales, and hence First Secretary in the Welsh Assembly.

The final nail in his political coffin, as far as Hyacinth is concerned, however, is that his house near Cardiff is an absolute tip. It looks as if its contents have been arranged by a small explosive device.

Most days *chez* Morgan there is a liberal sprinkling of books, papers and boxes - sometimes there are even half-eaten comestibles. His wife Julie, a feminist and MP for Cardiff North, certainly does not believe it is her function to resort to the feather duster any more than Morgan does.

New Labour does not approve of this. They might venture - in fact, they do - that Morgan's chaotic approach to matters domestic is a symptom of his harum scaram politics.

Alun Michael, who Tony Blair and his apprentices have decided to support, is a different kettle of fish entirely. Neat house, neat clothes, neat mind. As one Labour activist in Abercynon, south-east Wales says: "If you put a pound in Alun's slot, you'll get a quid's worth out. If you put a pound in Rhodri's slot, you might hit the jackpot or you might get bugger all back."

New Labour has a problem in its attempt to suppress the unsound Morgan. Every time members of the Party and unions in Wales are asked who they want to lead Labour in the principality, Morgan turns out to be the man by a significant margin. The only votes being secured by Michael are coming from union activists in proverbial smoke-filled rooms, and from MPs who are operating under the New Labour whip. It is a profound embarrassment to the Blair camp, and it may prove to be a fatal weakness in the longer term, even if Michael manages to be elected.

Despite his origins in north Wales, Michael is unable to shake off the image as someone who has alighted from a silken parachute with Millbank printed on it. Morgan, in comparison, is seen as the homegrown candidate with the necessary touch of south Welshian extroversion. The Prime Minister has been to Wales three times recently to show his support for Michael, but it is becoming counterproductive. Unlike the Mrs Buckets of this world, the Welsh feel they do not need to be wooed, cajoled and told how to vote. Many of them quite simply resent it.

Resentment was not a foreign emotion to Morgan's ancestors, who were a restless and rather colourful clan. Indeed, at one stage, they combined radical political action with cross-dressing. One of them, Morgan Morgan of Pontardulais, was one of the leaders of the Rebecca riots of 1840

in which agricultural workers disguised themselves as women and smashed up toll gates erected by private companies and landowners. Rhodri went to the trouble of taking his extended family on a visit to the area, where he explained their turbulent provenance.

Rhodri's father was largely unaffected by the insurrectional gene. He was a teacher of Welsh at the University of Wales at Cardiff, and later he switched to the Swansea campus where he became vice-Principal. His mother, who is now in her nineties, was among the first women to attend Swansea University.

LIFE STORY

Origins: Born 29 September 1939, in Cardiff.

Education: St John's College, Oxford (BA philosophy, politics, economics) and Harvard University (master's degree in Government). **Political Career:** Elected Labour MP for Cardiff West in 1987. Made Opposition spokesman on energy in 1988 and was front-bench spokesman on Welsh affairs 1992-97. Appointed chairman of Select Committee on Public Administration in 1997.

Family: Married Julie Morgan, MP for Cardiff North, in 1967.

Three children: two daughters, Mari born 1968 and Sian, 1969. One adopted son, Stuart.

Supporters say: "He's the people's choice."

Critics say: "He is very amusing, very knowledgeable, but he suffers from verbal incontinence."

Hobbies: Wood carving, long-distance running.

Mari, the elder of Morgan's two daughters, is a research scientist, and her sister, Sian, works for Shelter, the housing charity. The family tends to close ranks around Morgan's adopted son Stuart, who was charged with living off immoral earnings in 1988, burglary a year later, and then supplying cannabis. He is now studying at the University of Glamorgan.

A fluent Welsh speaker, Rhodri grew up in Radyr on the outskirts of the principality's capital, where his family imbued him with a taste for learning. He is by no means the typical south Wales boy of English legend - not one of the valley boys whose fathers worked down the pit, but who struggled.

At the age of 25, Ann-Margret's career was believed to be in terminal decline. Yet a few years earlier Ann-Margret became a human paintbrush, at one point covering herself in paint and wriggling around on a blank canvas.

It may have helped that Ann-Margret was not without a bit of previous in the writhing department. In 1966, she made a comedy called *The Swinger*, in which she played the author of a racy autobiography. Because the Hollywood version of the Swinging Sixties - created by bald-

gied to send their children to university. Morgan is part of Wales's meritocratic aristocracy - or *craicach* to use the slightly pejorative Welsh word.

Nevertheless, he went to the local primary school - the Welsh upper-middle class has never taken to fee-paying schools to the same extent as the English. Performing wonders in the 11-plus examination, he secured a place at Whitchurch grammar school, where he cheerfully boasts to having been top, or near top, in most subjects except science.

Rhodri's introduction to politics was somewhat gentler than that experienced by the hosts of *Rebecca*, but none the less cathartic. At the age of 11 he insisted that his mother take him to a political meeting near their home. There he witnessed a local female Labour supporter being reduced to tears by a crowd of public school Tory thugs. "I remember thinking, 'I'm going to nail those bastards,'" he says.

He waited some time before avenging the poor woman. He was very much a late-starter as far as full-time politics were concerned. He went up to Oxford and thence to Harvard University, where he took a master's degree in government. In common with Neil Kinnock, he spent some time as a Workers' Education Association lecturer in south-east Wales, sharing a flat with other great Welsh political exiles except science.

Morgan worked as an industrial development officer for south Glamorgan county council for six years from 1974, and he was then the European community's representative in Wales from 1980 to 1987, when he was elected MP for Cardiff West.

It has not gone unnoticed that he has chosen to live just outside the constituency. Although his political patch is "mixed", it contains some of the toughest council estates in Wales, suffering from all the usual problems of the inner city. In fact, Morgan lives in Michaelstone Le Pit, Wales's answer to Islington.

He has a deserved reputation for wit, although self-deprecating is not usually an ingredient. The appointment of Thatcherite John Redwood as Secretary of State for Wales seemed to be a legitimate target for satire. The decision by the Conservative Government was actually seen by Morgan - and the few Welsh people who cared to give it a minute's thought - as a practical joke.

On hearing the announcement, Morgan immediately challenged the Welsh Secretary to pronounce the longest place name in Britain: Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch.

Redwood gave three days to master the word, but preferred to ignore the challenge. Redwood caused Morgan to shake with uncontrollable laughter when he attempted to sing the Welsh national anthem, and instead performed a serviceable imitation of a river trout.

Morgan's reputation for humour - sometimes perceived as flippancy - was un-

derlined when he was asked last year whether he would be standing in the election to become leader of the Labour Party in Wales: "Do one-legged ducks swim in a circle?" he replied.

The *bomhomie* is currently masking deep disappointment - some would say bitterness - over the fact that Tony Blair failed to give him a ministerial post after Labour won the general election. Morgan was part of the team shadowing Tony Blair Office ministers and should have passed seamlessly into government. He was given the chairmanship of the Commons Committee on Public Administration as a consolation prize. Morgan's life hitherto had been effortless, according to his detractors, unmarred by any significant public failure.

Even Morgan's enemies in Wales say

Blair was wrong. "If ever there was a case of when it was better to have someone in the tent pissing out, this was it," said one of his critics. The detractor went on to damn him with faint praise by suggesting that a junior ministerial post would be quite taxing enough for his political skills.

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His chairmanship of the Commons committee has not enhanced his reputation at Westminster. He is regarded as

"woolly and diffuse", and guilty of "verbal incontinence". Fellow Welshman Kinnock

will testify to the potentially damaging nature of such criticisms. Observers believed that his chairmanship of the committee allowed Alastair Campbell, the Prime Minister's press secretary, to emerge largely unclothed from a hearing into the legitimacy of his private briefings to journalists. Old Westminster hands, most of whom do like him, accuse him of being chaotic. He is often late for appointments, turning up with at least two bags, one of which will be full of papers and the other overflowing with sports gear. Morgan combines a liking for woodcarving with a taste for ruthless jogging.

Morgan is also a quango-phobe who has hoarded those in semi-official positions who have feasted themselves on public money. "There are more quangos in Cardiff than gondolas in Venice," he has remarked, and be is determined to set about a cull. It is an attitude that has not endeared him to the great and the good in Wales, but strikes a chord with the electorate.

While there is a significant difference between Morgan and Michael in terms of personality, there is not an awful lot of difference between their political philosophies. Both are right-wingers in Labour's terms, although Morgan has never really been a cheerleader for the New Labour project. "If I use the phrase 'new Labour' it is with a small 'i,'" he says.

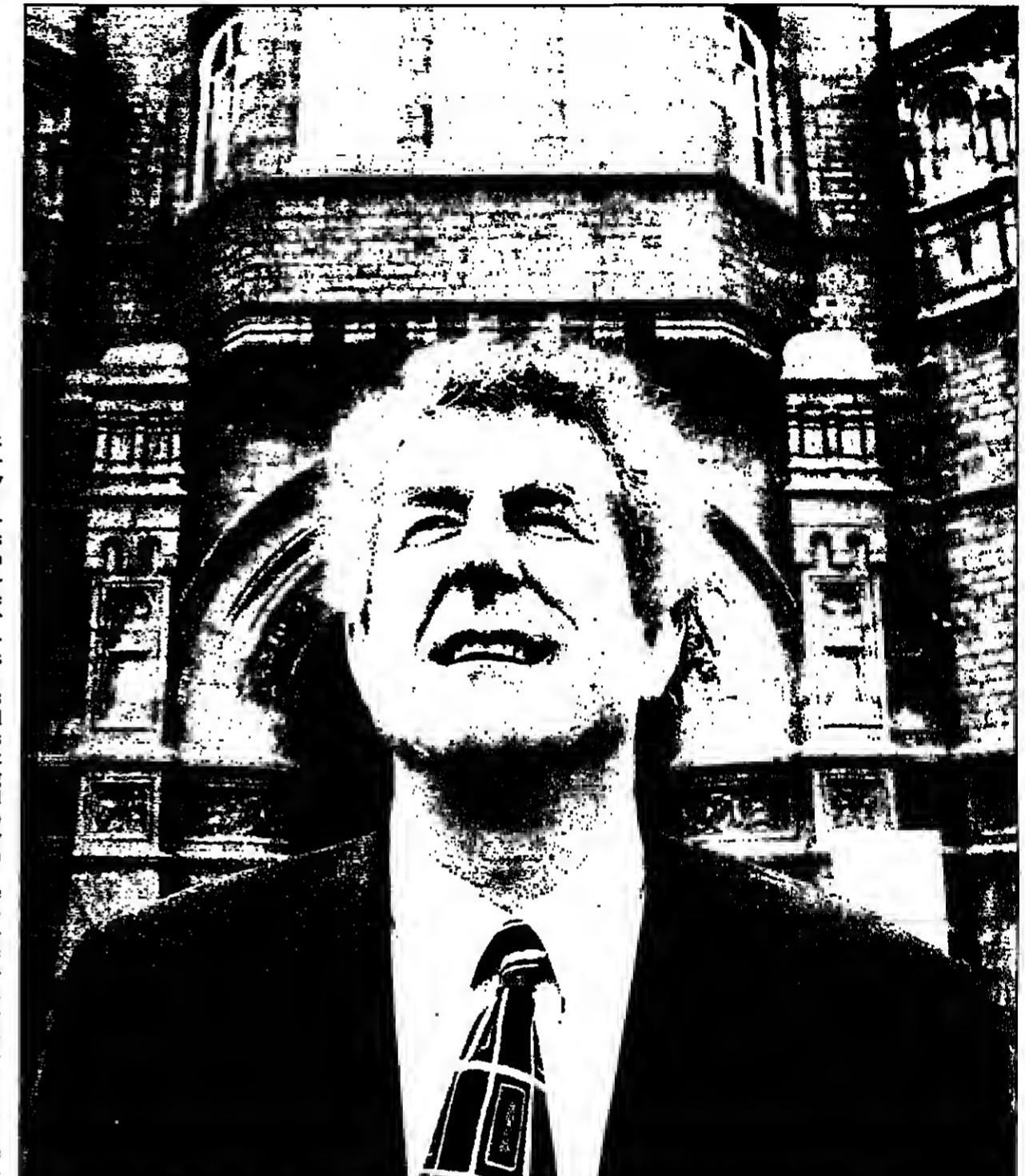
His main political interests lie in regional development, health, the environment

and European affairs. But the one policy that causes a flutter in the New Labour dove-cotes is his preoccupation with freedom of information. The "control freaks" at London Labour Party headquarters find it most worrying. Predictably, it was a policy much-trumpeted by Labour in opposition, but rarely referred to these days. Morgan intends to pursue a relentless policy of *glasnost* as soon as he is in a position to do so.

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The election is difficult to predict, but come what may, Morgan will not go away. There is even a contingency plan afoot to form a coalition of Morganites and Plaid Cymru representatives at the Assembly who would vote Michael out and The Sun sound One in. Morgan will follow the junction of Dylan Thomas and refuse to "go gentle into that good night".

BARRE CLEMENT



Mr Morgan at the Pierhead Building in Cardiff, a proposed site for the new Welsh Assembly

Rob Strutton

IT ISN'T every actress who can survive a movie that requires her to write around under the overcooked direction of Ken Russell. For Glenda Jackson the shame was clearly great she became an MP. But Ann-Margret, who - for no immediately apparent reason - is made to disappear herself in a bath-tub of baked beans in Russell's ineffable version of *The Who's Tommy* in 1975, came through the experience with her customary serenity.

It may have helped that Ann-Margret was not without a bit of previous in the writhing department. In 1966, she made a comedy called *The Swinger*, in which she played the author of a racy autobiography. Because the Hollywood version of the Swinging Sixties - created by bald-

ing paunchy movie producers who were not particularly swinging but often sixty - usually involved the casual humiliation of women. Ann-Margret became a human paintbrush, at one point covering herself in paint and wriggling around on a blank canvas.

At the age of 25, Ann-Margret's career was believed to be in terminal decline. Yet a few years earlier Ann-Margret became a human paintbrush, at one point covering herself in paint and wriggling around on a blank canvas.

She may very well have done in fact. They certainly had a romance, but her biography, *Ann-Margret: My Story*, is full of castless ladies leaving us closer to knowing how far she and the King went. A similarly discreet veil is pulled over her relationships with other early Sixties heavy hitters, including John F Kennedy and Frank Sinatra.

Kennedy certainly saw her as a replacement for Marilyn Monroe. In

1963, the year after Marilyn's famously breathy Happy Birthday Mr President, JFK chose Ann-Margret to pay him a similar tribute. There were also other parallels between the two actresses: unsuitable men, alcohol, and prescription drugs.

With her career reduced by the late Sixties to Italian potboilers, barely exhibited in America, you would not have staked much on Ann-Margret's future.

But Ann-Margret re-wrote the script. She refused to be used and abused by men in the way that Marilyn was. An article in an early Sixties fan-mag hints at the steel behind the pout. "Ann-Margret sweeps men off their feet," the writer gushes. "She goes on breaking hearts and making men miserable. Many a big game hunter has had better luck with lions than with this tantalizing tigress."

On screen she returned triumphantly in *Carnal Knowledge* in 1971, the first really serious movie she had ever done, with a moving display of vulnerability as Jack Nicholson's ill-used mistress.

She married Roger Smith, an actor from the television show *77 Sunset Strip*, a marriage that has endured more than 30 years, with

Smith acting as her agent and looking out for her like a mother hen.

She has never wanted for work.

Superior TV movies are what she does mostly these days, including a biography of Pamela Harriman, former wife of Randolph Churchill and so-called "courtesan of the century".

Who triumphed as her own woman after her last husband died, and was appointed American ambassador to France.

The story is not a million miles away from Ann-Margret's, a triumph not so much over adversity as over tacky bad taste, and the bad judgement of men in the face of a pair of breasts and a sweet smile.

Like Harriman, Ann-Margret thought of Girl Power long before the Spice Girls.

She goes on breaking hearts and making men miserable. Many a big game

hunter has had better luck with lions than with this tantalizing tigress."

On screen she returned triumphantly in *Carnal Knowledge* in 1971, the first really serious movie she had ever done, with a moving display of vulnerability as Jack Nicholson's ill-used mistress.

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THE WEEKLY MUSE

BY MARTIN NEWELL



Slyly fall the flakes of snow
And dust the car tops patchy white.
A wimpy, disappointing snow
For those who like the change in light
And kids who sleigh in sleep all night.

Put out a call for Desperate Dan,
He may well come in handy.
The racist accusations fly
And fall upon... *The Dandy*.
The Irish claim it's not PC -
A new boy on their pages,
"O'Diddle", who's a leprechaun
Accused of fresh outrages.
He makes the race seem stupid,
Which has fanned the situation
From flight of silly nonsense
To a larger conflagration.
A hugely rated race of poets,
The Irish take all credit.
The Dandy, though? I'd no idea
So many of them read it.

And Ofsted in the news again...
Unfortunate position,
Police to their profession
Or a type of Inquisition?
Let's go and ask a teacher
On edge of nervous breakdown,
Poised between the paperwork
And hureaucratic shake-down:
"There's something in the Woodhead -
Or should they make him go?"
I'm sorry, didn't hear you,
Was that a yes or no?

His favourite colour's purple,
His handbag's red and patent:
Is Tinky Winky closet?
It's possible he's blatant,
Says Reverend Jerry Falwell,
Who's issuing a warning
To guard all US children
From "Eh-oh" in the morning.
Sounds good to me, old fruitbat:
So here's the deal we'll make:
We'll keep our Telebutties
And you keep Ricki Lake.

The lion and the unicorn
Were in the Rose and Crown.
"You realise," the Lion remarked.
"That cig sales may go down.
The By Appointment logo
On packets means a lot."
"Yeah, right," the Unicorn replied.
"D'you wanna fag, or what?"

DAYS LIKE THESE

14 FEBRUARY 1831

FELIX MENDELSSOHN,
composer (pictured),
writes to his friend,
Heinrich Barnmann,
from Rome:



"In the last few days there has been the crazy carnival; the place swarmed with the craziest masks, the Italian women are at their most brilliant, people throw confetti at one another like mad, nosegays of roses and violets are thrown to the ladies in their carriages, and they reward one with a shower of bonbons and sugared almonds; the men have flour thrown at them till they look like miller's apprentices; but unfortunately the last three days, when everything is at its maddest, were lost for us."

"The day before yesterday, when I arrived on the Corso with a load of confetti, I found the whole street black with men, no ladies, not a mask to be seen; and at last I discovered, posted up at a corner, a papal edict proclaiming that the carnival was over because of

book which has the luck to find four thousand readers, one must:

1. Study French for two years in books written before 1700. I except only the Marquis de Saint-Simon.
2. Study the truth of the ideas in Bentham or Helvétius's *L'Esprit* and in a hundred and one volumes of memoirs: Gourville, Mine de Motteville, d'Aubigné etc.

In a novel, from the second page onwards, one must say something new or at least *individual*, concerning the setting of the action. From the sixth page onwards, or at the latest from the eighth, there must be adventures. The newly rich lend energy to good society, just as the Barbarians did in the 11th century to what was left of Rome. We are very far from the insipidity of the reign of Louis XVI. At that time the style of narration could be more important than the contents; today the opposite is true.

Read the trial of Gilles de Laval, maréchal de Rais, at the Royal Library. Invent

adventures of equal energy."

IAN IRVINE

better known as the novelist Stendhal, writes to a friend:

"I shall tell you frankly, monsieur; that to write a

affirmative; and he says of the inhabitant of those bleak wilds:

"Dear is that shed to which his soul conforms,
And dear that hill which lifts him to the storms;
And, as a child, when scaring sounds molest,
Clings close and closer to the mother's breast,

For myself, gentlemen, while I

THE WEASEL

After negotiating some well-endowed ladies of the art world, I was surprised to observe mass hanky panky in a Scarborough car park

HOW I wish the National Gallery would abandon the audio guides it provides for special exhibitions. Negotiating the throng at the deservedly popular Ingres show is tough enough without the additional hazard of plugged-in spectators obeying the commands of their earpieces. With whirling CDs bizarrely dangling over their hearts, these sad souls resemble the robots in the movie *Metropolis*. Deprived of free will, they barge like dodgems into anyone in their path. When going to view the works of Ingres, a close encounter with well-endowed ladies is only to be expected, but it's a bit much when this takes the form of the *balcon formidable* of a middle-aged art-lover.

The aristos and *haute bourgeoisie* portrayed by Ingres have attained a sort of immortality through the brush and pencil of the master, but there is a price to be paid. It is doubtful if his subjects would be entirely pleased with the captions which accompany their portraits. We learn a contemporary opinion of the rather dopey-looking Lady Bentinck: "What a good natured, potato-headed woman she is." Similarly, the note accompanying the daunting Countess de Tournon points out: "Her plain features are in no way idealised, indeed recent conservation has uncovered a mole on the bridge of her nose which an earlier restorer had touched out." However, no caption is required to draw attention to the whiskers of Madame Geneviève Bertie, the drawing appears in the catalogue but not the exhibition. As if appended by a particularly talented graffiti artist, her moustache is plain for all to see.

But how wonderfully the world of art has advanced in the 131 years since Ingres passed on to the heavenly academy. This was forcibly impressed on me by an item in a magazine last week which offered "Five artists to invest in". These artistic naps called a "high conceptualist" called Martin Creed, described as "an oasis of purity in a messy world". The work we are urged to buy is entitled *A Sheet of A Paper Crumpled into a Ball* (£150). I, in fact, have some empathy with this masterpiece. Before I invested in a computer 15 years ago, I produced numerous examples of a similar nature, often accompanied by an outpouring of profanities (the indelible hallmark of a great creator). But since becoming adept with the "delete" key, I fear I have lost the art.

I AM loathe to query such a doughty defender of civil liberties as Geoffrey Robertson QC, but I was stopped in my tracks by a statement in his memoir, *The Justice Game*. After recalling the manifold absurdities of the Oz trial, Mr Robertson backs back to another foray against the monstrous forces of oppression: his successful defence of the Sex Pistols against a charge of indecency concerning the title of their hit waxing, *Never Mind the Bollocks*. Here's the Sex Pistols. Mr Robertson recalls how he was "enlisted to defend a particularly polite and studious young university graduate who sung under the sobriquet of 'Jimmy Rotten' with 'fascist regime'.

They needn't worry. In his own memoir, *No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs*, Mr Rotten describes how he dropped out of the education system prior to A levels, despite a fondness for English literature, in particular the works of Ted Hughes, Wilde and Shakespeare. Probably it's as well that Mr R packed in his studies, otherwise academic pedantry might have constrained his memorable rhyming of "the Queen" with "fascist regime".

DISPLAYING THE customary American knowledge of the world beyond the continental US, a leading stateside movie website offers the following synopsis of *Little Voice*: "An otherwise mute Londoner becomes an overnight sensation with her gift for vocal mimicry." Of course, this enjoyable film is very much set in Scarborough. Though Brenda Blethyn richly deserves her Oscar nomination for her furious portrayal of Jane Horrocks' uniquely horrible mum, I think it's a pity that the great Yorkshire resort didn't also receive a nomination. Admittedly, I may be a trifle biased because Weasel Villas North is just 10 miles away.

Mrs Weasel and I kept nudging each other throughout the film as we spotted familiar sights. There was Michael Caine driving his lipstick-red gas-guzzler past the Futurist Theatre where I forced Mrs W to see Ken Dodd last year. The exterior of Jim Broadbent's sleazy nightclub turned out to be at Cayton Bay, where Charlotte Brontë once romped before it became a caravan camp.

But the most outstanding scene utilised the car park at Scarborough's fish dock, where Mr Caine and Ms Blethyn tested the suspension of his vehicle with a spot of extra-mural coupling. ("Under the bloody stars," as Ms Blethyn poetically describes it.) In fact, the film revealed a whole row of cars bouncing and creaking in this romantic milieu. It came as a surprise to me. Though this is the spot where I park when purchasing stocks of crus-

tacea from the shellfish stalls near by, there's always been more haddock than hanky-panky whenever I've been there.

AS YOU read this, Mrs W and self should be enjoying a weekend in Lille. "A busy textile town in the 19th century," my Hachette guide informs me, "with an urban proletariat whose wretched conditions were immortalised by Victor Hugo." Tempting, eh? We were prompted to hop across to northern France by the £99-for-two special offer currently being advertised by Eurostar. A rare coup for the Weasels, I gloated, until I hacked my way through the thicket of small print at the bottom of the offer. Sure, it's £99 unless you want to come back on a Sunday, in which case the price is jacked up to £119. Grr!

However, I hucked up after reading a line of even smaller print which pointed out that this increase applies only to cosmopolitan types returning from the fleshpots of Paris and Brussels. Hayseeds who venture no further than Lille still only cough up £99 when returning on Sundays. Hurrah! Bless you, Eurostar. Except, a further infinitesimal proviso caught my eye. The offer didn't apply from 12-14 February, which is when we had to travel. "The cheapest you can do it this weekend is £152.40 for two," trilled a Eurostar salesperson. Grrr!

On receiving the tickets, I discovered that this includes £14.40 insurance, which I didn't ask for, but it would be tempting fate to cancel. All aboard for the snicker's special!

SPIRIT OF THE AGE

PAUL VALLEY

At the altar of the atheists



Richard Dawkins, the high priest of evolutionary theory

in reality projected from somewhere outside? Dawkins, in response, told a daft joke about little men inside the TV but failed to address the substantive point that science can't explain the subjective side of life.

It was, he said, just a cheap debating trick to say that what science can't explain can be explained by some other discipline. Perhaps it can't be explained at all. God is just a product of the human desire for perceiving patterns, which was programmed into us because it helped human survival, but which, if not checked, makes us gullible suckers-up of New Age nonsense or the established religions, which are the same thing, only older.

But religion, suggested another questioner from the floor, does also offer consolation to the troubled. Science can't do that. No, said Dawkins, but who wants to be comforted by a falsehood? Surely it makes it all the more worthwhile to get up in the morning and use our brief time on the planet to try to understand what life is all about. He was just grateful to be alive, he said, to his biggest round of applause of the evening.

Grateful to whom he did not specify. The problem for atheists is that they are trapped in centuries of theistically conceptualised language, as is evident when they seem unable to find an alternative word for the "design" of things in nature.

Dawkins, no doubt, would here say we are into the problem of making cate-

goric mistakes. It is like asking "What does a four-dimensional object look like?" or "What was there before the Big Bang?" or "What's outside the limits of the single human form. But what about God 2 - the mysterious abstraction, the unknowable summation of the wisdom of mankind throughout the world and throughout the ages, the ground of our being?"

The discoveries of science only magnify rather than diminish such a God. In the face of which, of course, the apt response is not smug uncertainty so much as an open humility. And there did not seem to be an awful lot of that around this week in Central Hall.

Science and psychology may have killed off God 1 - the old bloke with the beard, the performer of magic who is a superhuman extrapolation from the limits of the single human form. But what about God 2 - the mysterious abstraction, the unknowable summation of the wisdom of mankind throughout the world and throughout the ages, the ground of our being?

The discoveries of science only magnify rather than diminish such a God. In the face of which, of course, the apt response is not smug uncertainty so much as an open humility. And there did not seem to be an awful lot of that around this week in Central Hall.

The cause of a civilised Europe



CLASSIC PODIUM
From a speech delivered in Liverpool by George Canning, the former foreign secretary, on Britain's mission to rid Europe of despotism (10 JANUARY 1814)

So the loud torrent and the whirlwind roar,
But bind him to his native mountains more.

What Goldsmith thus beautifully applied to the physical varieties of soil and climate has been found no less true with respect to political institutions. A sober desire of improvement, a rational endeavour to redress error, and to correct imperfection in the political frame of human society, are not only natural, but laudable in man.

Can any man now look back upon the trial which we have gone through, and maintain that, at any period during the last 20 years, the plan of insulated policy could have been adopted, without having in the event, at this day, prostrated this England at the foot of a conqueror? Great, indeed, has been the call upon our exertions; great, indeed, has been the drain upon our resources; long and wearisome has the struggle been; and late is the moment at which peace is finally brought within our reach.

But even though the difficulties of the contest may have been enhanced, and its duration protracted by it, yet is there any man who seriously doubts whether the having associated our destinies with the destinies of other nations be or be not that which, under the blessing of Providence, has eventually secured the safety of all?

For myself, gentlemen, while I



rejoice in your returning prosperity, I rejoice also that our connection began under auspices so much less favourable; that we had an opportunity of knowing each other's minds. In times when the minds of men are brought to the proof - in times of trial and difficulty.

I had the satisfaction of awning to you, and you the candour and magnanimity to approve, the principles and opinions by which my public conduct has uniformly been guided.

I thought, and I said, at the time of our first meeting, that the cause of England and of civilised Europe must be ultimately triumphant, if we but preserved our spirit untainted and our constancy unshaken. Such an assertion was, at that time, the object of ridicule with many persons; a single year has elapsed, and it is now the voice of the whole world.

Gentlemen, we may, therefore, confidently indulge the hope that our opinions will continue to run in unison; that our concurrence will continue to be as cordial as it has hitherto been, if unhappily any new occasion of difficulty or embarrassment should hereafter arise.

At the present moment, I am sure, we are equally desirous to bury the recollection of all our differences with others in that general feeling of exultation in which all opinions happily combine.

THE SATURDAY ESSAY

A free imagination, or the tyranny of the mob?

CHRISTIAN SALMON

Ten years on, Rushdie has shown us how literature is forgotten amid the hatred of art that haunts this century

WHEN THE news came over the wire services on 14 February 1989 that a writer had been condemned to death, the whole thing seemed at first like a dreadful anachronism. But instead of a mystery which we could only comprehend through analogy – that of Inquisition victims burned at the stake – there was the face of a real man on the front pages of our newspapers and on our television screens. It was the face of a writer unknown to the general public, half English, half Indian, who stood out for his novel way of expressing a fascination with mixed origins and mixed lives.

Salman Rushdie has been caught up in an unprecedented political/literary affair which for 10 years now has kept the secret services of several countries, armies of diplomats and police, commandos of fundamentalists and an overexcited media busy. He could have become lost in a media mirror-world, where the greatest tragedies turn into virtual reality: witness the case of Diana, whose sorry destiny as a media star he analysed on the pages of *Le Monde*. But he has escaped becoming a media victim, and first and foremost because he is a writer. Even as he led the struggle against terrorism by a state, he was waging another war against another fatwa – this one less clear cut and more difficult to win.

Those who promulgated this second fatwa were not the fundamentalist mullahs in Tehran, but politicians (sometimes progressive politicians), religious figures (sometimes the most enlightened ones) or even writers (John le Carré). Immediately after 14 February 1989 you could see them bury to express their solidarity and understanding. Not, however, with a writer threatened with death by a terrorist state – but with “Muslims unjustly insulted over their religious convictions”.

One church leader saw a link between the Rushdie affair and the campaign which had been launched a few months earlier against Martin Scorsese’s film *The Last Temptation of Christ*. Once again, he proclaimed, “believers are insulted over their faith: first Christians in a film which disfigures the image of Christ, now Muslims in a book about the prophet”. Monsignor John O’Connor, the Archbishop of New York, believed that Rushdie’s book was offensive and asked Catholics not to read it. The Chief Rabbi of Israel, the Vatican and Margaret Thatcher also expressed their disapproval, while Jacques Chirac, the future president of France, unwisely declared that he had “no sympathy for Mr Rushdie. I have read what has appeared in the press (ie the first chapters of *The Satanic Verses*). It’s pathetic.” But it was Mr Lustiger, a member of the Académie Française, who went furthest. He did not hesitate to state that “the figures of Christ and Mohamed do not belong to artists and their imagination” – thus incidentally writing off entire centuries of the history of painting.

Ten years on, the Rushdie affair has shown itself to be the final, and most theatrical, act of a tragedy of which all the protagonists – the media, the mullahs, “enlightened” Westerners and radical Islamists, leaders political and religious – have been one by one unmasks. Be it in Paris, New York, Rome or Jerusalem, literature has been forgotten; the fatwa has become steadily more acceptable and Salman Rushdie increasingly suspect. Only the talent, the courage, and the tireless presence of Salman Rushdie has allowed us to see what is really at stake in this affair: how literature is forgotten amid the hatred of art which haunts this century. It is a fatwa against fiction.

According to this fatwa, *Dead Souls* is an insult to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. *Madame Bovary* is a



Muslims in Bradford burn *The Satanic Verses*, one of the protests that led to Ayatollah Khomeini declaring a fatwa on Salman Rushdie Asadour Guzelian

defence of adultery and Nabokov’s *Lolita* – a novel which it would be impossible to publish today – is a defence of paedophilia. Or take Joyce’s *Ulysses*, once described as “the literature of the lavatory” and as “literary Bolshevism”. It was published in Paris in 1922 but remained banned in the US until 1933 and in England until 1937. No matter that, throughout this period, pornographic books, anti-religious tracts and licentious pseudo-novels abounded. It’s always literature which is persecuted.

But what’s so threatening about fiction? Michel Foucault suggested that there are several levels of censorship that which covers explicit content (for instance, a catalogue of blasphemous words) and that which covers forms of language that are deemed to go too far “not in their meaning, or in their verbal content, but in their interplay”. Into this forbidden and proscribed category fall de Sade, Joyce, Rushdie, Rabelais, Céline and Genet. The fatwa against Rushdie did not punish a crime of opinion. It punished a novel. And not just Rushdie’s novel, but the genre of the novel in its entirety.

Nadezhda Mandelstam recounts Kruschev’s story of how Stalin once saw a famous actor on television playing the part of a traitor. Stalin was so impressed by the actor’s skills that he declared only a real traitor could play the role so well – and ordered that the required measures be taken.

Half a century later, on 13 February 1989, Ayatollah Khomeini was also watching television, and saw the Pakistani police open fire on demonstrators who were protesting against the publication in the US of a book entitled *The Satanic Verses*. Khomeini hadn’t read the book but was so taken with the scenes of massacre on screen that he concluded that a book called *The Satanic Verses* could only be a satanic book, the sole purpose of which was blasphemy and insult. So he went into the next room and dictated his fatwa on the spot, requesting Muslims the world over “to put to death Salman Rushdie and his publishers, wherever they are found”.

It’s hard to know whether the lesson of these tales is that tyrants are overimpressive or that they watch too much television. But they are proof anew of a failing

of literary history: a Don Quixote-like confusion between reality and fiction.

When Don Quixote interrupted a puppet show, took his sword and ran through two puppets because they were not behaving in keeping with the rules of chivalry, he was displaying the blindness of Stalin confronted by the actor/traitor. His rigid notion of chivalry denied him that minimum of distance from events, without which parody, the theatre, the very description of something else is impossible.

The crowds who gathered across the world to oppose publication of *The Satanic Verses* had not read the book. Like Khomeini they were reacting only to the title – as if *The Satanic Verses* were not a novel; thus do hundreds of thousands of Don Quixotes protest, without knowing it, against the behaviour of an individual, his dreams and his ideas. These are crowds ready to kill on account of beings which are merely the product of paper and ink. But how can you blame them when the West’s political and media élites, make the same mistake?

Great works stand out because of the uncertainty they plant in our minds. They do not involve the explicit excesses and obscenities which bring about bans and taboos. Instead, they change perceptions and touch the most sensitive themes, searching out, as Rushdie puts it, “new angles from which to penetrate reality”. They strive to create a different hierarchy of the senses, to make us look at ourselves in different ways. *The Satanic Verses*, after all, is not simply about various episodes from the Koran and the condemnation to death of its author; found guilty of having challenged God’s word with his profane words and of having created confusion over identity and origin. It is a paean of love to emigration, to cultural cross-breeding, to the sheer exotic richness of modern life.

The Satanic Verses turns exile into a defining experience which allows the real world to be re-explored and a new world to be discovered. “America, a nation of immigrants, has created great literature out of

cultural transplantation and the study of

how people cope with a new world,” Rushdie writes.

Today, as a result of migration and nomadism, languages and cultures are

moving into a new age. Rushdie’s novel testifies to this new and giddy diversity of the human condition, its entanglements and collisions. This is the new world to which *The Satanic Verses* tries to give shape with all the attendant risks and surprises.

Rushdie’s novel – and this is why it has burst so disastrously into the real world – is an attempt through fiction to gain a grip on the central question of modern life. The question is not the one which confronted writers like Flaubert, Balzac and Proust in their era: how do you enter society? Society then meant the Arnoux family for Frédéric in *L’Education sentimentale*, Rastignac’s Paris in *Balzac* or the Guermantes salon in *Proust*. The questions Rushdie asks are: how do you enter a world that is absolutely open? How do you come into the world when you belong to several worlds? What are you born as when you are a migrant? In other words, how do you find identity and individuality in a world where all identifications are equivalent and equally possible?

The Satanic Verses is the first great carnival novel of the era of globalisation. It is an immigrant’s inside vision of the world – not as something distant and exotic, but with all the conflicts and contradictions that go with the immigrant’s condition and the transformed awareness this implies. Perceptions change, not only of time and space, but of sexual, culture, religion, even of one’s own body.

The fall of a plane upon London in *The Satanic Verses* – which stands for a fall into our Western times and a fall out of a theocentric world – is the start of a process that reorders our notions of good and evil. Traditional values are not rejected. They crumble gradually. They continue to exist as memories, fetishes, left-overs, clichés. They are carried along, displaced and deformed, in the great swirl of forms and values that constitutes Rushdie’s carnival.

Kafka wanted to write the world history of a single soul. Rushdie, on the other hand, seeks to bring the great circus of globalisation alive, giving it form and people. The essential job of fiction, according to Gilles Deleuze, is to invent a people which is missing. With Rushdie and his giants of immigration and the world, we are present at the birth of such a people. It is a people

of immigrants, scattered between London and Bombay. It is a people made up of men betrayed, because they have been “moved beyond their origin” and because their values and identities mix with each other and contaminate each other.

This is why the fatwa against Rushdie finds its supporters *avant*, not only in Tehran. For modern censors, it is first and foremost the tyranny of conformity. Today, we persecute what is unformulated and unbelievable – everything that is different and heterogeneous, everything that is being born. It’s not surprising, therefore, that in its focus on language, on the individual and his search for new forms of identity, the novel comes up against the drained but still fanatical mob, blindly following the prophets of purity in everything, turning back on their tracks in search of a lost identity, in a futile quest for origins.

The Rushdie affair is different from the Dreyfus case, which produced a clear demarcation between Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards and in which the intelligentsia emerged as supreme defender of right and justice. The Rushdie affair has lacked that clarity, because ultimately it has not been about defying *raison d’état* and forcing recognition of the fact that a man unjustly condemned is innocent. It is not about defending established rights or returning honour to a truth scorned. It is about the recognition of a right which cannot be precisely defined and which indeed has yet to be invented. This right involves another sort of compromise between literature and politics. It is the right to fiction, the right to depict things.

The Rushdie affair has become our affair in some respects it has been played out in the shadows but it has made a huge impact none the less. A festering quarrel that is four centuries old, between literature on one side and religion and politics on the other, has been forced into the open at a global level. Far from being a passive victim, Rushdie has waged a daily war against fear. It has been a strange story of imagination disarmed yet insurgent – what Edward Said has called “an intifada of the imagination”.

The author is secretary general of the International Parliament of Writers

BAROMETER

SEAN O’GRADY

Gay icon

Tinky Winky, one of the Tellytubbies, has been “outed” by the Reverend Jerry Falwell. The American preacher says “Tinky Winky is shaped like a triangle, the gay pride symbol. I believe these subtle depictions are intentional and are damaging to the moral lives of children.” The hunt is on for closet gays on children’s TV. George, the pink hippo in *Rainbow*, and the campiest puppet in television history, had better watch out.

Gladiators vanquished

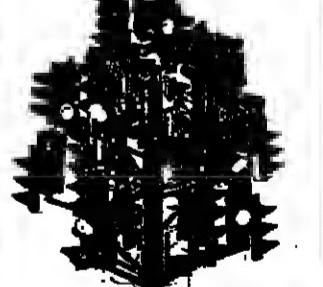
So farewell, then, Jet, Hunter, Wolf, Cobra, Nightshade and Lightning. And huge cotton buds. Wave a giant fingered sponge goodbye to the heady mixture of muscle power and glamour that was *Gladiators*. The ratings were fading and the fans got bored. Even the Prime Minister confessed two years ago that “*Gladiators* was favourite viewing in our house. Now it’s whatever happens to be on, sometimes *You Bet!* or *Noel’s House Party*.” But it was not for the want of trying by the LWT producers. One of them, Ken Warwick, alleged that he was paid to persuade the male Glads to put hints of newspaper down their shorts.

Ramrod Robin
This is Robin “Gladiator” Cook, obviously not a man who needs to stuff anything down his undies. Now, is that a police battering ram he’s welding, or is he just pleased to see us?

Mini camper
This is the Paul Smith “designer” Mini. Its multi-coloured paint job complements the chubby features

of this automotive Tellytubby, now on show at the Design Museum in London.

Image of the week
This new sculpture has been erected at a place called Westferry Circus, here at Barometer’s home in Canary Wharf. The tree took six months to create and is the work of Anglo-French artist Pierre Vivant. “Planted” its tree on the spot where a real tree had died of pollution. Its 75 sets of lights flash red, amber and green in a cycle reflecting the changing colours of the leaves during the year. Potentially confusing to road users. Cost? £100,000.



Mr Laws triumphant

Sunday
Get up, it’s extremely cold and I am worried that it will spoil my tennis. I’m on the court at 10, but it’s so cold I can barely hold the racket. One of my friends from Unison rings to say that National Grid think they are going to have to repay the money they took from our pension fund.

Monday
I get a call in the morning to confirm the court number and start-time of 9.30 for Wednesday. This causes me some consternation, because we have sent out 1,200 letters to members of the Association of Electricity Supply Pensioners telling them it is a 10am start. This will cause difficulties over cheap day>Returns. Some of the lovely East Midlands ladies call to say that the rail fare will

be £80; they apologise for not being able to come.

Tuesday
At bloody 8.30 the phone starts ringing. I get 50 calls from people committed to coming and some giving apologies. In the evening my girlfriend arrives with huge quantities of food from Marks & Spencer. I crack open a bottle of wine and put my feet up. Later I get out my suit with the mothballs; I am not particularly happy to be wearing a fit, as I haven’t worn one in five years, but I think I should try and look reasonable as I might hit the TV.

I get a call from my solicitor, Peter Wood, to revise our meeting for 8am tomorrow. I watch the news before going to bed.

MY WEEK

DAVID LAWS, CAMPAIGNER FOR THE PENSION RIGHTS OF ELECTRICITY WORKERS

– a victory for the ordinary man.

Up at 5.30. I am lucky that my girlfriend has offered me a lift to the station. I am feeling reasonably confident, I arrive early at my solicitor’s. Peter is still in his cycling gear when he tells me we’ve won. I let out a big yell, hug him and dance. My fellow campaigner Reg and his girlfriend arrive, and we study the judgment. I am delighted to find the decision is unanimous, a victory for 2,000 members in all the electricity companies in the country

I make every endeavour to stay together with Reg and Peter. Reg seems to have problems keeping up, but he is 75. All the press are there. I do a photo-call, with some astonishing posing.

Everyone goes to The George pub. Within 10 minutes, the barman tells me that the limit behind the bar from our fund has been reached; we rapidly agree to extend it.

I have an interview at Meridian TV for the six o’clock news. I feel like it hasn’t gone well, but they seem happy. My girlfriend arrives unexpectedly. I’m in a happy mood and indulge myself in a cigar, a coffee and a brandy. I am determined to catch up and video the news.

On leaving the court, there is a clatter of goodwill and congratulations, which is extremely touching.

Thursday
Get up and listen to all my answer-

ing-machine messages from yesterday. They are heart-warming and congratulatory. Local radio and newspapers have also called, but I was yesterday’s news and today it ain’t.

Today is clear-up-the-house day, then I’m off to the town centre to do my shopping. In the evening I meet my girlfriend in the leisure centre bar. It’s a nice end to the day.

Friday
I call Peter in the morning to speak about the case. I’ve left it a couple of days before calling him, to collect my thoughts. In the afternoon I make a guest list for a celebratory evening I’m arranging. I’ve got to be realistic, about 30 to 40 people, I don’t want a wild party.

INTERVIEW BY DAISY PRICE

The last seduction

Gay men are tired of living in fear of Aids. So now they're turning risk into a thrill. By Andrew Gumbel

Pete is into barebacking. He is a gay man who likes to have unprotected sex with other men. He advertises himself on the Internet as a "good-looking Italian" with a lean, muscular body and an appetite for hours of pleasure - strictly without condoms. As long as people understand his particular predilection, Pete will take whatever he can get.

Pete isn't sure if he is HIV-positive or not. "Last I checked it was negative, but not sure 'cause I like taking it raw and have done so a lot," he wrote in a recent online exchange with the American gay columnist Michelangelo Signorile.

"Do you have any concern about becoming poz [positive]?" Signorile asked him. "I have a concern about it, sure. But love it raw, even with that concern."

"What if you become positive?" Signorile persisted. "Well, I'd like to stay neg," he said. "But it's a very manageable disease with meds today. I'd probably not die from it."

A survey of homosexual and bisexual American men just published by the government Center for Disease Control and Prevention shows that, for the first time since the height of the Aids epidemic, condom use has become less rigorous. While 69.9 per cent of respondents reported using a condom without fail for anal sex in 1994, that number slipped to 60.8 per cent in 1997, the latest year for which figures are available. The biggest slippage was among men between the ages of 26 and 29 - the first generation to have grown up entirely under the shadow of the epidemic.

According to the San Francisco-based Stop Aids Project, which contributed much of the data for the CDC report, the rate of HIV infection appeared stable for now, but there was a sharp increase in cases of anal gonorrhoea - not life-threatening in itself, but it increases the risk of HIV two to five times.

"There is a shift taking place within the context of the epidemic," said the Stop Aids Project's Robert Perez. "After years of dealing with Aids, people are getting restless. They want it to be over. They want to be able to have sex without fear."

Barebacking is not a new phenomenon in the gay community, but for the past few years it has been generally assumed that participants are HIV-positive already and merely want to maximise their fun now that it is too late to avoid contagion. New evidence suggests, however, that the phenomenon is spreading to HIV-negative men who are less concerned about infection than they used to be, and even to some who actively seek HIV-positive partners.

A number of Internet sites deal in disconcertingly revealing buzzwords like "bug chaser" (someone seeking an HIV-positive partner) and "gift-giver" (a positive man looking for someone negative to infect). There are adverts for "Russian roulette parties" in which four negative partners aim to get together with a fifth, HIV-positive one for the thrill of it. One particularly forthright site called XtremeSex is advertising a mass barebacking party in Dallas, Texas in April.

How to make sense of the phenomenon? The gay community is both wary and deeply divided over the issue. Traditional activist groups have condemned barebacking and attempted to play down the extent of it, while radical voices denounce what they see as the shrill sermonising of the "condom Nazis".

Robert Perez of the Stop AIDS Project, for example, insisted that barebacking was practised by "a tiny minority" of gay men as a whole, and insisted that, despite the disappointment of the CDC's latest figures, it was still an achievement for 60 per cent of gay men to use a condom during anal sex. But in this month's issue of the New York-based magazine POZ, written for HIV-positive men, journalist Michael



Gay men don't want to face a lifetime of wrapping themselves in latex

Rex Features

Scarce writes: "Distinct from an innocent slip-up, drunken mishap or safer-sex 'relapse', barebacking represents a conscious, firm decision to forgo condoms and unapologetically revel in the pleasure of doing it raw. Some people use the term barebacking to describe all sex without condoms, but barebackers define it as the premeditated and eroticisation of unprotected anal sex."

As part of his research, Scarce visited a barebacking house in the Castro district of San Francisco. He paid \$1 at the door, was invited to take his clothes off and signed a doc-

ument agreeing not to discuss illness, HIV or treatment. The intense sex he witnessed - a regular Thursday night fixture - was utterly silent, with no questions asked. Such accounts dismay and incense traditional anti-AIDS activists, who have accused POZ of glamourising barebacking as sexy and desirable. The magazine's cover shows an HIV-positive gay porn star sitting naked astride a black stallion in an unmistakably erotic pose.

"I am surprised at POZ, not only

for sensationalising the movement, but for not presenting a balanced

view. Nowhere did I see the word 'responsibility'. As an HIV-infected man myself, I take that responsibility very seriously," said Tom Coates, director of the AIDS Research Institute at the University of California in San Francisco.

Meanwhile, the barebackers are asserting condom-free sex as something of a right. "After 18 years of living in doubt and crisis," a 36-year-old barebacking lawyer called Zach told Scarce, "men don't want to face a lifetime of wrapping themselves in latex." It remains to be seen how long such a defiant stance can last.

TOM, MY unsporty son, was exfoliating the delights of rugby to his little brother, who had yet to try the 15-a-side game. "It's definitely more fun than football," he assured him. "But Tom, you HATE rugby," I objected, remembering that the full rugby kit - including mouth-guard - required by his new school had been worn precisely twice before Tom opted for medicine-ball in the gym, or whatever alternative is offered in these enlightened times. "Well, it's my favourite outdoor sport," he insisted. "It's just that I don't like getting all muddy and cold in winter."

The rest of his sentence was lost in my guffaws as I burst into a chorus of "Mud, mud, glorious mud". Rugby's detractors may describe it as cross-country wrestling, but surely getting muddy is the very essence of the sport. My memories of my own schoolboy rugby career are limited - I wasn't much good at it - but it always seemed to be raining, and it was fun getting covered in mud from head to toe. As a spectator, the particular glory of the pristine white uniform worn by the English internationals team is that it looks completely filthy within 10 minutes of kick-off.

If you share Tom's taste in sport and don't have a dog to walk, there's very little reason to go outside for the six months of the British winter: you might as well emigrate to Florida. Better, in my view, to find reasons to enjoy cold, damp weather, and playing rugby is one of them - you charge around enough to keep yourself warm, and have the sheer, elemental fun of hurling yourself and your opponents into the mud.

Football is, of course, more adaptable, which is one of the reasons for its universal appeal and its spread to parts of the globe too dry to have much grass, let alone mud.

PARK LIFE

BRUCE MILLAR

One of the traditional pleasures of British football, though, is the long-range sliding tackle, a manoeuvre alien to the South American game and one which comes into its own on boggy mid-winter pitches.

And it is not only mud that can be best enjoyed through sport. Earlier this week, I awoke to find a thin blanket of frozen slush over the world - the closest we have come to snow this year. In a weak moment I considered abandoning the weekly run on the local running track in favour of an indoor work-out at the gym, but luckily I decided to go ahead as planned.

I had the slippery track to myself and began running slowly and gingerly, my shoes crunching the knobly ice at each stride. Slowly my feet felt more secure and I gathered speed. Perhaps I was becoming used to the conditions. But no: what was happening was that the ice was gradually melting as the low winter sun transformed the cruel morning into a bright, crystal-clear day.

I can't recall having observed or experienced conditions changing at such close quarters before, and it was certainly the highlight of my week. I know I'll never persuade Tom that he should play rugby, and that doesn't bother me. But I do hope he finds some way to enjoy getting cold and wet and muddy.

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Mud, mud, glorious mud

Fifty years after their expulsion from Poland, the Germans are back. What are they after? And why? By Steve Crawshaw

The return of a nightmare

Admittedly, it does not look like a prize piece of property to argue over. A plain one-storey house, a brick shed, a couple of fruit trees. Ducks and geese wander formally across the frozen village pond; at one end of the village a huge stork's nest sits in solitary splendour in the fork of a tree; in the village stores, the selection of goods is almost as basic as in Communist times. In the village of Mosina, in north-west Poland, poverty is the rule. Most farmers can barely make ends meet – and they fear that things are getting worse.

But at least the land is theirs – or seemed to be until recently. Jerzy Gawel and his family have lived in Mosina, south-west of Gdansk, for 50 years. They have no other home. Before 1939, however, Mosina – then known as Mossin – was part of Germany. The man who lived in Gawel's house as a child 50 years ago wants the farm back. The demand, and others like it, has opened up a can of political worms.

The letters from 60-year-old Heribert Wehrly are suavely threatening. Wehrly, an agricultural engineer from Paderborn in western Germany, sent copies of pre-war maps to bolster his claim to the property, which he left when he was five years old. In a four-page letter to the local mayor, he refers to international law – the Hague, the United Nations, Bosnia, you name it – and to the "painful but necessary" changes in law that Poland must make, including the "restitution of property to the Germans", if it wishes to be considered for membership of the European Union.

All of which might be dismissed as a bad joke – a green-ink letter written by a malicious eccentric – were it an isolated case. But it is not. Some of Wehrly's demands for restitution are on pre-printed, bilingual forms. When I telephone Wehrly, his wife says that he does not talk to journalists. But one thing is clear: thousands of such forms, distributed by an association of German expellees, have been filled in by those

who were driven out in 1945. Now that the Communists are gone, they have a chance of getting their hands on their property once more. Jerzy Gawel, whose father rebuilt the house from ruins after 1945, feels bewildered: "I'm just a little pawn." His 75-year-old mother, Natalia, is nervous. Wringing her hands in front of the house the German wants her to lose, she says: "They said we shouldn't be afraid – but who knows what will happen next?"

This is unfinished business, as far as the Germans are concerned. In 1945, the Western Allies agreed to pick Poland up and dump it to the west, so as to keep Stalin happy by giving him more lebensraum. The Oder-Neisse line – named after the two rivers that mark the post-war Polish-German border – made little objective sense. But nor did much else at that time. Poland lost a

'We don't trust the Germans – they'll take us, not by war, but with money'

quarter of a million square miles in the east, and gained swathes of German territory in the north and west in return.

The expulsions remained a raw German wound. A post-war West German school history book referred to "terrible suffering, such as the world no longer considered possible in the 20th century". Grotesquely, the reference was not to Auschwitz, or to any other aspect of Nazism, but to the painful expulsion of Germans from their homes.

There is what might be called a Serbian quality to this German sense of victimhood: an awareness of their own (real) suffering, and a determination to ignore the suffering of others. Put the ultimate crime of Auschwitz to one side for a moment. Put to one side six years of



Uneasy peace: the Polish village of Mosina used to be the German village of Mossin

Tom Pilston

routine brutality against Poles – who were "more like animals than human beings" in Hitler's view.

Even if one addresses only the narrow question of ethnic cleansing, Germany started the ball rolling, only weeks after the invasion of Poland in 1939. In the words of Thomas Urban, the German journalist and historian: "More than a million Polish citizens were affected. Most of them were dragged out of their beds at night; they could only take the bare necessities with them in their rucksacks, and had

to head for the east in cattle trucks."

Anna Pertek was 12 years old when the Germans arrived in the village of Przyrowa, just across the border from Mosina into pre-war Poland, in 1939. She is close to tears as she tells a familiar story from that time: "They took the village teacher and shot him. He was such a good man. They took him, they took the priest. They murdered them all – and we're supposed to forget it. We should – but it's difficult." The remaining inhabitants of the village were forced out, minus their pos-

sessions, so that Przyrowa could become a "decent" Pole-free zone. As far as Anna Pertek is concerned, the Germans who were thrown out six years later had it easy. But that is not the way it seems to the Germans.

Some are still keen to pick at the old historical scores, however, under the guise of sorting things out. The German parliament, the Bundestag, complained last year of the "great injustice in violation of international law" suffered by the expellees, and insisted that Poland must change its property laws if it wished to "help

overcome the consequences of war and expulsion". Poland exploded with anger at what it saw as a deliberate provocation: the Polish parliament retorted with an almost unanimous condemnation of the "dangerous tendencies" of the Bundestag resolution. The new social democrat chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, wants to stay sweet with the powerful lobby of the Federation of Expellees: he will give the keynote speech at the Federation's 50th anniversary celebrations for the Federal German Republic in May.

For many Germans, the renewed interest in the eastern territories is mere nostalgia. Bookshops across the country are full of lavishly illustrated books depicting the woods, lakes and broad shady avenues of the former German lands of Pomerania and east Prussia. At an official level, too, Germany is not keen to be seen as the Big Bad Wolf of the region.

There is a loophole, however. Agricultural land in Poland is cheap – and Germany insists that, under EU rules, Germans and others must be allowed to buy Polish land freely. As far as the Poles are concerned, that is equivalent to the point in a Monopoly game where one player owns hotels on Piccadilly, Park Lane and Mayfair, while another owns nothing but a mortgaged Whitechapel and Old Kent Road. From that point on, the game's ending is predetermined. The Poles feel that the Germans are rich and getting richer. The Poles are poor and – especially if they lose the property that they still hold – doomed to get poorer still.

Some are unbothered by the property claims and by the non-stop stream of German visitors. Thirty-eight-year-old Leszek Kicinski speaks warmly of the family who once lived in his home in Mosina, and who regularly come to visit, bringing gifts for the children. "They're very kind. We've been to stay with them in Hamburg several times. If we don't write, they ask us, 'Have we said something to offend you?'" Others are glad for the extra income that German visitors bring.

For others, however, this is the return of a nightmare. In some respects, Poland is increasingly anchored in the West. Next month it joins Nato; in a few years' time, it looks set to join the European Union. In Mosina, however, Anna Pertek feels only angry despair: "We don't trust the Germans, and we never did," she says.

"They'll take us – not by war, but by money. I don't want anything from them – I just want them to leave us in peace. But they'll come anyway, and they'll get it all for free."

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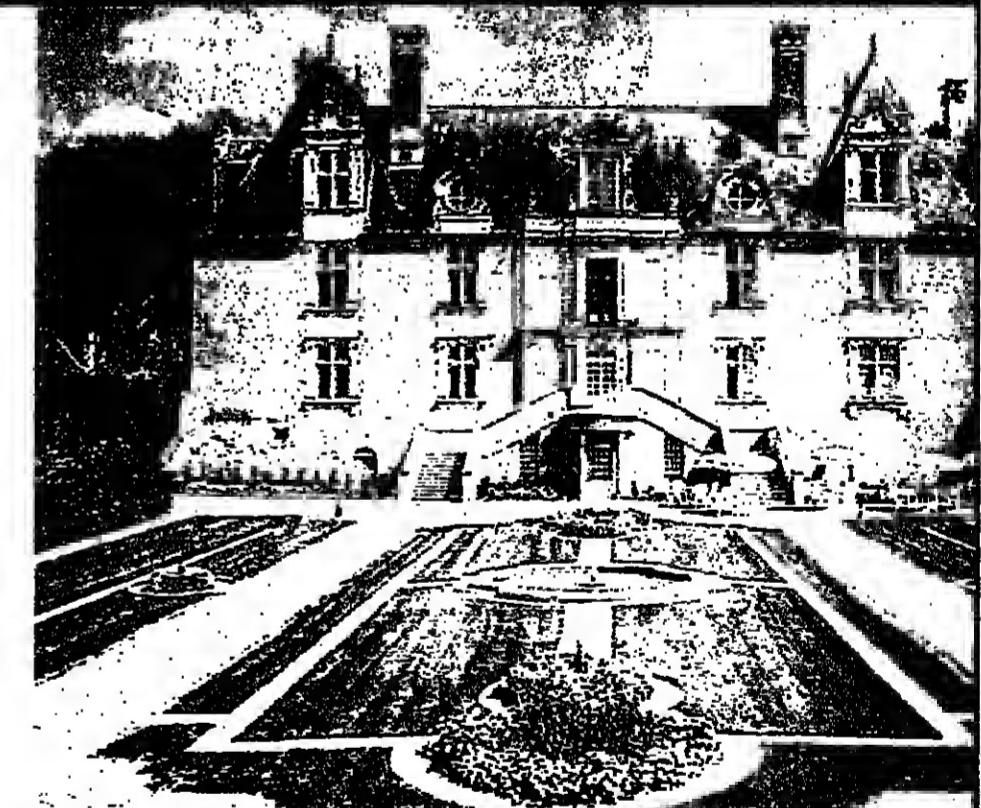
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Corona North

CORONA NORTH turned the wilderness she inherited at Altamont, Co Carlow, into one of the great gardens of Europe. Her single-minded passion has evoked comparison - with certain qualifications - with Scarlett O'Hara's at Tara.

When, in 1983, Isobel Lecky-Watson died at the age of 101, she bequeathed Altamont House and 140 acres of beautiful but mostly unserviceable land on the banks of the Slaney to her two daughters, Diana and Corona. Everyone - not least Corona's husband, Gary, and Diana herself - assumed that the estate would be sold and that the proceeds would ensure a comfortable and leisurely old age for the two sisters.

They had not banked on Corona. A passionate plantswoman, she set about restoring the largely derelict gardens, took the arable land back in hand and, by dint of her own unceasing labour and by chivvying, bullying and cajoling others, contrived to turn Altamont into one of the best-loved and most-visited gardens in Ireland.

Altamont boasts many rarities, but it is its diversity which makes it unique. Man's - or more usually woman's - hand has touched it only so much, for Corona North's passion for the red squirrels and the ravens which haunt the woods and the eels and otters of the riverbank equalled her enthusiasm for plants of better recorded pedigree. Immediately beneath the 18th-century house are the formal gardens with their rosebeds and pergolas, a giant Wellingtonia surrounded by Portugal Laurel, planted to commemorate Waterloo, a peony walk, wisteria walk, tulip trees and handkerchief trees.

Rare azaleas, rhododendrons and magnolias surround the one-acre lake which was dug in order to create a labour during the famine of 1845. Beyond, the stream and the garden plunge into an ice-age glen of sessile oaks and giant granite boulders.

Here are rare camellias and hollies, Chilean tree ferns, ferns and bog-plants, but here too unofficial fungi,

In the chaos, her parents forgot for months to name her. She was called after her father's favourite rhododendron



North's gardens at Altamont are among the most visited in Ireland. She left them to the Irish government

Keane land, hunting, fishing, dancing and making the annual pilgrimages to Badminton, Punchestown, Cheltenham and Galway. The Lecky-Watsons, however, had a less public passion. The family had been amongst the more discerning patrons of the intrepid plant collectors of the 19th and 20th centuries, and many of the azaleas at Altamont are descended from these early gleanings.

Corona, like all her kind, scorned the "Anglo-Irish" appellation. She was Irish. On the other hand, Ireland was part of the British Isles and her links with England were strong. When the Second World War broke out, therefore, she "naturally" caught the ferry and enrolled as a nurse. She recalled often the pleasure of coming home on leave on a train which would run out of fuel and have to wait until the passengers had cut enough turves to build up a head of steam.

Returning to Ireland after the war, Corona gradually took over the running of the demesne. She was never able to make a good thing of the farm, but resisted all attempts to sell the land, in part because she loved her Channel Island herd and the gloriously mixed fowl which strutted about the gardens, in part because she loved their produce. She would drink cream by the half-pint, and the menu at her many lunches was nearly unchanged - pâté made with Altamont chickens and poached salmon on Almont soda-bread with Altamont butter, fresh Slaney salmon or, out of season, beef, and Altamont fruit, again with cream.

In 1965, when Altamont's great lake froze over, Corona held a party at which she was struck by the stylish skating of Colonel Gary North, late of the Buffs, a visitor at a neighbouring house. They married the fol-

lowing year and moved into the old steward's cottage above the river, which Corona extended ad lib with a characteristic blend of elegance, impulsiveness and impracticality. It was on her mother's death, however, that Corona North's life's work began in earnest. To her husband's grumbles, she moved to the big house and then all but neglected it as she worked to clear beds and woodland, to plant and to prune. Dawa would find her feeding her fowl, working in the dairy, then putting in an hour or so in the garden before breakfast in the bow-windows overlooking her handiwork. Way into dusk, she could be found - or rather, in general could not be found - in baggy corduroy trousers, battling with hraeken or briars in the glen. Gary would summon her with a hunting horn, explaining, "Woman's evaporated again."

This labour of love was rewarded by thousands of visitors and pupils at the garden holiday courses she initiated, and, at the last, by the Irish government's agreement to take over the gardens after her death and continue to manage them according to her principles: "We want to keep them intact for future generations to enjoy and to instil in them knowledge and a love of gardens, wildlife and nature, and the necessity to care for and protect their heritage."

Corona North's last words to her oldest friend, Rosemary Skinner, were, "Well, I've achieved what I wanted to achieve. It's safe now."

MARK DANIEL

Corona Deane Lecky-Watson, gardener; born Fenagh, Co Carlow 7 July 1922; married 1966 Gary North (died 1991); died Altamont, Co Carlow 7 February 1999.

David McComb

AUSTRALIAN ROCK acts exist in a cultural vacuum and have to earn their dues overseas before being accepted back home.

The Triffids, whose tall and charismatic front man was David McComb, followed in the footsteps of the Birthday Party and the Go-Betweens and relocated from Perth to London in the mid-Eighties. Their distinctive melodramatic songs earned the band a cult following in Britain and the rest of Europe but, despite the critical acclaim given to albums like *Born Sandy Devotion*, *Calenture* and *The Black Swan*, mainstream success eluded them.

Born in 1962, McComb was the youngest of four sons in a medical family, his father a plastic surgeon of Protestant Northern Irish stock and his mother a geneticist with Huguenot ancestry. Religious images and medical references, along with maritime metaphors, abound in his haunting songs and sea-shanties.

Growing up in the coastal town of Perth in Western Australia, McComb eschewed the beach-bum culture, attended Christ Church Grammar School and proved a gifted student, winning prizes in Eng-



Front man of the Triffids

lish literature and divinity. While still at school, he formed his first band, Daisy, with Aly Macdonald on drums. Daisy was a multimedia project, producing music, books and photographic work, and its output reflected McComb's early interests, in Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, the Velvet Underground and Patti Smith.

Going on to embrace disparate elements of popular music from country to electronic via the arty punk of

Television and Talking Heads, Daisy had, by 1978, evolved into the Triffids, and also comprised Martyn Casey on bass, Phil Kakulas, soon replaced by Jill Birt, on keyboards, and one of McComb's brothers, Robert, on violin, keyboards and guitar.

McComb went on to Curtin University in Perth, to study journalism and literature. In 1980, the Triffids won a band demo competition and released their first single, "Stand Up", on the Shake Some Action label, the following year. By then McComb had decided to give music a real go. From their remote base, the Triffids moved to Melbourne before eventually settling in Sydney.

After a couple of singles and EPs, the group had saved up money from support slots with the Hoodoo Gurus, the Church and Hunter and Collectors, and in 1983 completed a debut album, *Treeless Plain*, for Hot Records, a Sydney independent. However, McComb later recalled:

"Australia, we were stuck between two worlds. We were trying to balance the harshness of Australian nature with a sense of romance. We were neither an art band nor a rock band like Cold Chisel or Midnight Oil. The Triffids had critical recognition and a thriving audience

- as much as an Australian independent band could cheerfully expect. But since we had already hauled ourselves 3,000 miles from our home town, we decided to head for the UK. This wasn't meticulously planned; it was just less trouble than getting US work visas."

The Triffids arrived in London in 1983 and with the addition of "Evil" Graham Lee on pedal steel guitar, recorded the *Born Sandy Devotional* album (1986) and *Wide Open Road* EP and played a series of "aggressive, cathartic shows. Even the band were confrontational," said McComb. The group were hailed by the British media, were featured on the John Peel show and supported Echo and the Bunnymen, and could now go back and take part in the "Australian Made" tour headed by INXS, in January 1987. "An Adelaide paper called the Triffids the most un-Australian and the most European band on the hill," said McComb.

Down under again, the Triffids had built an eight-track machine inside a shearing shed in the outback and cut the country-like album *In the Pines* (1986). On their return to the UK, they signed to Island Records. Armed with the considerable budget of £125,000, and the production skills

of Gil Norton, David McComb and his cohorts - including a new recruit, Adam Peters, on guitar - concocted the lush orchestrations of the poignant "Bury Me Deep In Love" and the melancholic wide-screen atmosphere of the subsequent *Calenture* album (1987). The title was a reference to "a fever or delirium when sailors have been away from land a long time and they start going loopy. They're convinced the rolling waves are green fields, so they jump overboard in a sort of homesickness gone badly wrong."

Despite the release of another two excellent tracks as singles ("Trick of the Light" and "Holy Water"), Calenture didn't have the impact expected of it. "We realised we had been touched by the blessed hand of Spinoff Top when we found ourselves to be certifiably... big in Belgium, Holland, Greece and Scandinavia," said McComb. "It was obvious a beautiful era was at an end." In 1989, the "Goodbye Little Boy" single featured in the Australian soap opera *Neighbours* but, following *The Black Swan* (1989) and a live album recorded in Stockholm, the Triffids split up.

McComb subsequently worked with the Blackeyed Susans, recorded a single, "The Message", and covered "Don't Go Home with your Hard-On", for *I'm Your Fun*, a 1991 Leonard Cohen tribute album. In 1994, he issued a fine solo album, *Love of Will* on Mushroom Records, who also issued *Australian Melodrama* (1994), a Triffids compilation album.

Backed by the Red Ponies, McComb toured Europe but was taken ill while travelling to New York later that year. A successful heart transplant in early 1995 enabled him to resume his studies, at Melbourne University, where he formed a new band, costar, which played sporadically.

On 30 January, David McComb was injured in a car accident. He was released from hospital, but died suddenly at his home in Melbourne two days later.

PIERRE PERRONE

David McComb, singer, songwriter and guitarist; born Perth, Western Australia 17 February 1962; married; died Melbourne, Victoria 1 February 1999.

Brendan Devlin

HAD ALL the members of the medical profession, not just some surgeons, listened to and acted upon the principles of audit, quality assurance and evidence-based practice proposed by Brendan Devlin more than 15 years ago, many of our present difficulties and loss of public confidence would never have occurred. His approach to surgery was encapsulated some 35 years earlier by George Armitage of Leeds when he said "Surgery, like cricket, is only interesting if you keep the score."

Born in Lancashire in 1932 into an Irish medical family and having thus seen medical practice in England and Ireland before the creation of the National Health Service, Devlin became an ardent supporter of its ideals, wanted it to be of the highest quality and learnt much about how to achieve his aims through the political machinery of the newly created Health Service from his father. This background led him to read for and obtain a BA in Public Administration and Political Science, in Dublin, before reading for his medical degree, which he obtained with honours in 1957.

His surgical training followed the standard pattern of the day, five years as a Registrar, time off service for research, followed by four years as a Senior Registrar; collecting an MD, an MCh, and Fellowships of the English and Irish Surgical Colleges on the way.

Such a training, moving from hospital to hospital at six-monthly or yearly intervals, leaves little time to think beyond the day-to-day problems of surgical practice but, whilst working with Sir Hugh Lockhart-Mummery at St Thomas' Hospital, Devlin became increasingly disturbed by the distress suffered by many patients with ileostomies and colostomies. Artificial openings of the bowel on the abdominal wall following removal of part or the whole of the colon caused by poorly fitting rubber bags and adhesives that often caused a severe dermatitis around the stoma. He was concerned about the way in which these problems affected the patients' whole life and so went out of the hospital to see them in their homes, arranged for them to be visited by nurses and encouraged the development of better bags and adhesives.

This work, including a book, *Stoma Care Today* (1985), continued after his appointment to a Consultant post at North Tees General Hospital, and with the work of others helped the growth and development of the British Colostomy Society, of which he was elected Chairman in 1998.

This experience rekindled his concern for the surgical patient

when not in hospital, the effect of hospitalisation and the panic of our knowledge about the long-term physical and social effects of many surgical procedures. His response, which determined his whole career, was only to admit patients to hospital for as short a time as possible (or not at all) and to count all aspects of the cost of his clinical work - clinical audit.

As soon as he arrived in North Tynes around 1970, he started performing day case surgery - 15 years before the Royal College of Surgeon's first publication on the topic. As hernia repair was one of the main operations performed as a day case, he naturally became especially interested in the methods of hernia repair and more importantly their

results. Although this interest produced many publications on hernias including a major textbook, *Management of Abdominal Hernias* (1988), and took him on lecture tours to many parts of the world, its most significant result was to emphasise to him, yet again, the poor quality of evidence advanced to justify the multitude of medical opinions concerning not only the best form of hernia repair but many other surgical procedures. Anecdotes, case series, experience yes - but where was the hard, scientifically acceptable evidence?

In the early Eighties, he began his most important work - a crusade to make all doctors, not just surgeons, audit and constantly review their work. After many lectures and discussion groups conducted all over the UK, he persuaded the members of the Association of Surgeons and the Association of Anaesthetists, with the support of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, to establish a National Confidential Enquiry into Perioperative Mortality (NCEPOD).

Its first report was published in

1986. It is now firmly established and is one of the national audits that is to be supported by the new National Institute for Clinical Effectiveness. As Director of CEPID and later as Director of the Royal College of Surgeons Audit Unit - now the Department of Clinical Effectiveness - he championed the use of audit, guidelines, individual comparative audit, patient information brochures and quality assessment by patients. His biggest regret was that his profession has been so slow in adopting these methods of guaranteeing quality.

All this work was performed whilst conducting an active surgical practice and whilst being a member of the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of England where as Chairman of the Examinations Board he led the revision of the nature and contents of the FRCS examination, making it, under its new MRCS, an assessment of basic surgical training.

His CV describes the multitude of committees he chaired, books and articles written and lectures given but does not capture the zeal, en-



'Keeping the score'

thusiasm, sometimes frustration and anger, of an exceptional man, whose lifelong concern was the well-being of the whole of every patient, body and mind, whether they be in hospital at home, at work or at play, and his unswerving belief in "keeping the score", to which NCEPOD will be his lasting memorial.

NORMAN BROWSE

Hugh Brendan Devlin, surgeon; born 17 December 1932; married 1958 Ann Healey (four sons); died 26 December 1998.

Lt-Col Jean Ballarin

IN 1941, Jean Ballarin led what is always regarded as the last charge of the French cavalry.

He was a professional soldier who joined the French army as soon as he was 18, in 1933. At the outbreak of the Second World War he was a corporal, stationed in Syria, with a regiment of Moroccan spahis. He heard the appeal of General de Gaulle broadcast from London on 18 June 1940 and like many other soldiers serving overseas he had to make a choice. He had lost faith in generals. But there was one general remaining. Like many others, including Moroccans, he left Syria and went via Egypt to the Sudan.

The French troops were put to guarding the Suez Canal from July to October when the British command brought them into the area where an offensive was being planned against the Italians. Ballarin was with the Moroccan spahis who moved to Kassala on the frontier between the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and Eritrea.

The terrain was extremely difficult, being largely mountainous, with primitive paths that were unsuitable for pack animals. The French unit had been given uniforms by the 5th Indian Division although they scrupulously kept their red kepis. Otherwise their equipment was lacking, particularly in automatic weapons. Therefore, given the terrain and this circumstance, they were particularly reliant on their horses.

Their orders were to reconnoitre the area of northern Eritrea and to engage with the Italian forces they encountered. On 2 January 1941 they were negotiating the plateau of Umberga when they came unexpectedly on a force of Askari soldiers with Italian officers. Although the Italians were superior in numbers the French charged them, pursued them, and charged them again. The Italians took refuge in dense vegetation.

This was not a large-scale encounter. The French lost one spahi, the Italians had nine dead and abandoned four prisoners. The platoon which charged twice and was led by Ballarin, numbered some 20 men.

For the rest of his life Ballarin appeared as a heroic figure: after the defeats of 1940 he had played a leading role in a French victory, and one which seemed in the finest of French military traditions. When the Eritrean campaign was over, Ballarin's unit was equipped with armoured vehicles and automatic weapons, suitable for the desert war.

Ballarin fought with Free French forces in Syria, and was afterwards stationed near Cairo. From there, under the command of General Koenig, he took part in the battle of El Alamein. As the Allied troops moved westward, Ballarin (by now a lieutenant) went with General Leclerc's army, in its attack on the German forces in Tunisia. Ballarin's plateau came under very heavy fire in the battle of Medenine, where he fought alongside the 2nd New Zealand Division and was under the command of General Freyberg. Afterwards, in March 1943, he passed to Leclerc's command. The fighting of the French in southern Tunisia earned a typical tribute from Montgomery. "Well done." On 2 June 1943 Ballarin was decorated and made a Companion of the Liberation.

A considerable change then came his way. De Gaulle had gone to Algiers on 30 May 1943. In August Ballarin was summoned to go there and to become head of de Gaulle's personal escort, with the rank of captain.

He did not accompany de Gaulle to France or to Paris in 1944, but returned to join Leclerc's army as it moved eastward towards Strasbourg and Germany. He was present at Hitler's last desperate attempts to keep Alsace in German hands. He stayed with Leclerc's celebrated 2DB as it was called (2ème Division Blindée), and went on to occupy Hitler's mountain home at Berchtesgaden.

After the war Ballarin remained with Koenig, who had admired his courage and now respected his facilities as an administrator. He was Koenig's chief aide in his command of the French zone in occupied Germany, and of French forces in North Africa. In 1948 he experienced a hectic short period when Koenig became minister for defence in the government of Pierre Mendès France. This appointment, against the express wishes of de Gaulle, had to strengthen the French forces in Indo-China and find a compromise agreement for the creation of the European Defence Community.

With Koenig's resignation Ballarin returned to the army. In his last appointment, promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel, he was given command of the 5th Regiment of Moroccan spahis. He retired from the army in 1962 and devoted himself to business interests in the 13th arrondissement of Paris. But he was always remembered as the soldier who led the last charge of the French cavalry.

DOUGLAS JOHNSON
Jean Ballarin, soldier; born La Ville d'Avray, France 15 January 1915; married (four sons); died Paris 27 January 1999.

Mari

BIRTHS,
MARRIAGES
& DEATHS

I.t.C
Jean
Ballan

Marius Schoon

MARIUS SCHOON'S life was a powerful argument against the notion of racial stereotyping. Nelson Mandela has described him as "an enduring example of the fight for non-racialism and democracy. He destroyed the myth that all Afrikaners were racists and oppressors. He therefore will be greatly missed, not only by his colleagues in the fight against apartheid, but by the entire South African nation."

White South Africans who challenged the apartheid government in the 1980s, at the risk of everything most precious to them, were very few. The number of white resisters whose first language was Afrikaans – the language of the regime that had institutionalised racism in every nook and cranny of social and personal life, the language of the police raid and the torture chamber – was minuscule. Schoon was one of that tiny handful. He both loathed the ideology of racism and loved the richness of the Afrikaans language, especially its poetry.

After the massacre of unarmed demonstrators at Sharpeville in 1960, radical opponents of the government, along with Nelson Mandela in the leadership of the African National Congress, turned towards violent methods of resistance.

Schoon served 12 years in prison for a futile effort to blow up a radio transmitter at a police station in Hillbrow, Johannesburg in 1964, a fiasco compromised from the beginning by the police provocateur who had set it up. His two colleagues in this attempt were Mike Ngubeni, a black South African, and Raymond Thoms, a white English-speaking South African. Ngubeni was sent to join Mandela and other black male political prisoners on Robben Island, while Thoms and Schoon were sent to Pretoria Local Prison, where the white male political prisoners were kept. (Prison, like everything else in South Africa, was strictly segregated.) The strain of his long sentence broke Thoms's spirit, and on his release he killed himself. While Schoon was in prison, and following their divorce, his first wife, Diana, had also committed suicide.

On his release in 1976, he joined the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party in exile. For a period, while living with his second wife, Jeannette, in Botswana after his release from jail, he was a contact for the underground ANC military wing, Umkhonto weSizwe.

He had met Jeannette, a former student and trade union activist, after his release from prison. Both were "banned" and prohibited from meeting each other, and they had in the customary way "skipped the border" and left South Africa illegally. It was while Schoon was working as a university teacher with the ANC in Lubango in southern Angola in 1984 that South African state assassins, under Major Craig Williamson, decided to kill him. Their chosen weapon was the parcel bomb. (The same technique, and the same assassin, killed the writer and political leader Ruth First in Mozambique in 1982. Williamson has also admitted responsibility for the bombing of ANC headquarters in London the same year.)

Schoon was away from their flat in Lubango when the parcel bomb arrived. It killed Jeannette and their six-year-old daughter, Kathryn. Their son, Fritz, then aged three, was found wandering nearby. Schoon's life was left in ruins.

Schoon, said Nelson Mandela, 'destroyed the myth that all Afrikaners were racists and oppressors'

Schoon had made a radical break from the ideology of apartheid when young. His father was an intellectual advocate of the apartheid system, a headteacher and both a zealous member of the National Party and a member of its secret guiding "brain", the Afrikaner Broederbond. Schoon himself studied at the academy of the Afrikaner elite, the University of Stellenbosch, before transferring to the more liberal and radical culture of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. There he joined the non-racial Congress of Democrats, an organisation of white leftists allied to the ANC.

Not long before his release from prison in 1976, Schoon had the satisfaction of knowing that his father had publicly protested – at a National Party meeting – at Schoon's treatment in



Schoon spent 12 years from 1964 in prison in Pretoria

prison, and had resigned from the party to join the opposition Progressive Federal Party. Such strange things did happen in apartheid South Africa.

Schoon came through his losses, a scarred and battered survivor, caring for his son, and moved eventually to the Republic of Ireland. There he met and married Sherry McLean. After the downfall of apartheid, they returned to South Africa in 1990, where Schoon worked in the Development Bank, overseeing projects to help rural black communities. His friend and fellow political prisoner Hugh Lewin has said that he would "hate to describe him as a banker. He was far too much of a poet." Schoon wrote both in Afrikaans and in English.

Prior to the opening of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission last year, Schoon had begun a civil action against

Craig Williamson for damages. By a very narrow margin, the court decided to withhold judgement, pending Williamson's application for amnesty to the TRC, on the grounds that the killing of Jeannette and Kathryn was political. Schoon angrily rejected a suggestion from Williamson's lawyers that they meet "and reconcile". Judgement is expected later this month.

PAUL TREWHELLA

Marius Schoon, political activist, teacher and poet; born Johannesburg, South Africa 22 June 1937; married first Diana Openshaw (one daughter, marriage dissolved), second Jeannette Curtis (died 1984; one son, and one daughter deceased); third Sherry McLean; died Johannesburg 7 February 1999.

Gideon Rafael



'Not on this plane, gentlemen'

GIDEON RAFAEL was one of the pioneers of Israeli diplomacy, and served as ambassador to London in the difficult years following the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

Alongside his early chiefs, Moshe Sharett and Abba Eban, Rafael set a standard of independence and flexibility in pursuing Israel's cause that was not always appreciated by a succession of hard-headed prime ministers. For the last 20 years of his life, he was a trenchant critic of governments moving too slowly, or too grudgingly, towards peace.

He was born in Berlin in 1913, the son of a prosperous furrier, and escaped to France in 1933, two months after Hitler came to power. He made his way to British-ruled Palestine a year later. Like many of his generation of German immigrants, he entered the Zionist public service through intelligence. His first mission, in 1939, was to smuggle illegal immigrants from Europe. In 1940, he conducted abortive negotiations with Adolf Eichmann to save 40,000 German Jews.

During the Second World War, in cooperation with British intelligence, he interrogated Jewish fugitives reaching Palestine via Turkey and Syria. It was feared that some might be German

spies. He also collected evidence on Nazi war criminals that was handed over to Allied prosecutors in 1945. After the war, he catalogued stolen Jewish property in Germany and Austria.

In 1947, Rafael cut his diplomatic teeth lobbying the United Nations for a Jewish state. When Israel gained its independence in 1948, he helped Sharett to set up the Foreign Ministry in two rooms of the Labour Party's Tel Aviv

headquarters. Sharett assigned him to draft cables seeking diplomatic recognition. "Keep them short," he urged. "There's not much in the kitty."

Rafael plunged into the quest for an accommodation with the Arabs. He was the last head of the Israeli delegation to the 1949-50 Lausanne conference, when the United Nations brought Israeli, Egyptian, Syrian, Jordanian and Lebanese delegations to the same city, but never around the same table. The Israelis did meet, secretly and separately, in obscure village coffee houses with all but their Syrian counterparts. "The meetings," Rafael recalled, "were friendly, but they only emphasised the gap separating us." The story was the same in clandestine contacts he maintained, as head of the ministry's Middle East desk, from 1953 to 1957.

He once told me of a chance meeting with an Egyptian ambassador on a flight to New York. The Egyptian indicated that he wanted to talk and pointed towards the toilet. A sharp-eyed stewardess intercepted them. "Not on this plane, gentlemen," she said, and another chance went begging.

After serving as ambassador to Belgium and the European Community,

Rafael was appointed ambassador to the United Nations in 1967. The Six Day War tested his skill, ingenuity and stamina to the full in Israel's efforts, first to persuade the UN not to pull its peace force out of Sinai, then to head of a premature ceasefire when Israel was winning, and finally to discourage the Security Council from demanding an unconditional Israeli withdrawal. He lost one and won two.

Rafael returned to Jerusalem as Foreign Ministry director-general from 1968 to 1972 before a final posting as ambassador to London from 1973 to 1977. His autobiography, *Destination Peace – three decades of Israeli foreign policy*, was published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson in 1981. He continued writing and lecturing almost to the end and was a willing source for historians and documentary film-makers.

ERIC SILVER

Gideon Rafael, diplomat; born Berlin 5 March 1913; ambassador to the UN 1967-83; Director-General, Israeli Foreign Ministry 1968-72; ambassador to Britain 1973-77; married Nurit Weissberg (two sons, one daughter); died Jerusalem 10 February 1999.

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

BIRTHS

OLIVER: On 11 February, to Roger and Ellen, a son, John Francis, a brother for Clare and Joseph.

HALES: On 2 February 1999, to Brenda Flather and Jonathan Hales, a fine son, Ben William.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In memoriam) are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (notices, functions, forthcoming meetings, Marriages, etc.), which must be submitted in writing, are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra.

GAZETTE

BIRTHDAYS

TODAY: Mr Michael Attentor, principal associate director, Royal Shakespeare Company, 48; Dr David Atterton, chairman, Guinness Mahon Holdings, 72; Miss Caroline Blakiston, actress, 66; Mr Liam Brady, football manager, 43; Professor Derek Burke, former Vice-Chancellor, University of East Anglia, 69; Miss Jacqueline Clarke, actress, 57; Dr John Clayton, former Apothecary to HM Household, Windsor, 78; Miss Margaret Collins, former Matron-in-Chief, QARNNS, 72; Mrs Gareth Davies, chairman and group chief executive, Gwynedd International, 68; Miss Eileen Farrell, soprano, 79; Professor Janet Finch, Vice-Chancellor, Keele University, 53; Baroness Flather, councillor and local government worker, 65; Mr Peter Gabriel, musician, 49.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

Princess Alexandra tomorrow attends a Gala Performance at the Royal Albert Hall, London SW1, to celebrate the theatre's re-opening.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. TOMORROW: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 10am; 1st Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment mounts the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Scots Guards.

LECTURES

TODAY: Victoria and Albert Museum: Divia Patel, "Henri Cartier-Bresson in India and Asia", 2pm. National Portrait Gallery: Anna Harvey, "Record of a Woman: Felicia Dorothea Hemans (1783-1855)", 1.10pm.

The Samaritan on the road to Luton

THE CALENDAR of world religions in a crowded seaway. Festivals and small sit

toose to tall like cruisers plying a busy shipping lane. And it is premium time for sailings right now.

As one school of Buddhism prepares for Nirvana Day on Monday to mark the passing away from this world of the religion's founder, Gautama Buddha, Hindus are the same day getting set for Great Shiva Night, said to be the date on which Shiva the Destroyer performs the cosmic dance from creation to destruction. In addition this is the week in which Christians celebrate Ash Wednesday when the physical and spiritual discipline of Lent begins. But is there space for another festival in such a full programme? Perhaps. Just perhaps.

At least that's what came into my head this week during a chilly Monday morning rush hour on the (largely) unsympathetic streets of south London. That's when I figured I might just have witnessed the Descent of the Dove at the junction of Blackshaw Road and Maybury Street and thought the experience worth commemorating. Let me explain.

We had set off, my son and I, late for school. Not hugely late, to be fair, but late enough – being on the first day of his exams – to raise the nervousness quotient from medium to high, given that 25 miles of unpredictable traffic along suburban roads and Home Counties' freeway lay ahead. Given, too, that my trusted but tired Escort is showing signs of age.

On Monday though, it played by the rules and we set off with reasonable hopes of making up time. Minutes into the journey our hopes were dashed as the eternal law of cause and effect – second-hand karma – kicked in and the outside rear tyre burst. John and I didn't hear the pop but soon became aware of the subsequent deafening thunder of metal on metal which sounded like, well... Great Shiva Night.

Ignoring the heads (by now rotating in formation) of passers-by looking in appalled fascination at the source of the

dim, I slackened my funerary pace still further and, somewhere north of Luton, came to rest in a side street. It was here that my problems really began.

I got out and, like a weary man preparing for a marathon, readied myself for the task ahead. As I stood by the immobilised assembly of rubber, metal, glass and plastic that had minutes earlier, passed it off convincingly as a vehicle, I looked around and saw myself, in the faces of drivers, passengers and pedestrians alike, the cosmic indifference of those who have towards those who have not. Solzhenitsyn's semi-fictional Ivan Denisovich

FAITH & REASON

TREVOR BARNES
Three major religious festivals occur this week – in the Hindu, Buddhist and Christian calendars. But in our multi-cultural age it is perhaps time for a secular fourth

puts his finger on it when he says from his Arctic labour camp that a man who is warm cannot possibly imagine what it is like to be cold.

No matter though, I thought by the rules and we set off with reasonable hopes of making up time. Minutes into the journey our hopes were dashed as the eternal law of cause and effect – second-hand karma – kicked in and the outside rear tyre burst. John and I didn't hear the pop but soon became aware of the subsequent deafening thunder of metal on metal which sounded like, well... Great Shiva Night.

Ignoring the heads (by now rotating in formation) of passers-by looking in appalled fascination at the source of the

Widening my son's vocabulary by the minute, I persevered to no avail. As the nervousness factor now crept into the red, I realised we were on our own. Abandoned to our fate we were going nowhere. Instead, mired in the kind of helplessness from which philosophies and religions are born, I was forced to recognise my need, my simple need on something utterly outside myself.

As drivers passed, each one eyes me with an impatience bordering on the psychotic. To be honest, I thought I saw a flicker of concern in them all. But, caught up in their own nervous timetable, they too were unable or unwilling to stop and help. Then, in a moment as glorious as it was unexpected, something unusual happened. Across the road a car was slowing down and a youngish lad of the hard school who, under different circumstances – notably after dark – would have suggested trouble with his window and asked after my well-being. Yes, he had a decent wheel brace; yes, he was prepared to get out and lend the muscle power; yes, he short, he would help.

My hand on his shoulder could not convey the gratitude I felt as he took his leave – a Rastafarian composite of the Lone Ranger and the Angel Gabriel squeezing into a red VW. I felt genuine affection, too, with more than a touch of shame and guilt at my readiness, under those "different circumstances", to sum him up and draw unreliable conclusions about his character.

There and then I resolved to inaugurate an addition to the festival calendar. It is to be known as Samaritan's Day, to be celebrated every 24 hours all year round, by all faiths and none, in recognition of those undeserved moments of transcendence which confound our prejudice and, against all the odds, persuade us that life is not all bad. Also known in the non-Christian world as Dependence Day, it would remind us that what we have share, and what we give we receive.

Any chance, do you think, it might catch on?

The sound of silents

Glossy new prints of classic silent movies have provided Carl Davis with the opportunity to compose sumptuous new scores for them. His latest work is for Ernst Lubitsch's *Old Heidelberg* – and tonight he conducts it live for the first time. By Judith Palmer

I don't know if Edward VIII got out to the cinema much, but I suspect some princely adviser or other should have tried a little harder to point him in the direction of Ernst Lubitsch's 1927 silent classic, *Old Heidelberg*. Set in a storybook German principality at the turn of the century, this dark romance explores the impossible love between a crown prince and a barmaid. Essential viewing for would-be kings and consorts everywhere, this poignant tale of passion and obligation gets a fresh airing at the Royal Festival Hall on Saturday – the first time in over 70 years.

Old Heidelberg is the latest silent to get the Photoplay treatment – burnished up in a spanking new print to the live accompaniment of the London Philharmonic Orchestra as Carl Davis conducts the UK premiere of his luscious new score in an all-encompassing rush of strings and smouldering celluloid charisma.

It's nearly 20 years since Kevin Brownlow and the late David Gill teamed up with Carl Davis to restore Abel Gance's split-screen epic, *Napoléon*. Since then they've created a pioneering repertoire of over 30 films: tracking down lost scenes, and editing back missing sequences, correcting film speeds, and commissioning potent new scores, to reinvigorate the most stunning movies of the silent era – from Garbo in *Flesh and the Devil*, to Valentino's *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*.

Old Heidelberg may not be in quite the same tempestuous super-league, but Lubitsch (who later went on to direct Garbo in *Ninotchka*) transforms an off-the-peg love story into a far subtler dilemma, suggesting you can never go back and recapture the past. Under the "Lubitsch touch", the normally over-mannered Norma Shearer achieves a twinkle spontaneously, weaving through the beer-gardens with an armful of brimming steinlagers, while the Latin matinée idol, "Ravishing" Ramon Novarro, creates a haunting figure of trapped isolation in servitude to the State in a film of outstandingly sophisticated, fluid cinematography. As Billy Wilder noted, Ernst Lubitsch "could do more with a closed door than most of today's directors can do with an open fly".

Based on Romberg's Broadway-smash operetta, *The Student Prince*, Lubitsch's version was banned from using either the original title or the original music. "It's a fabulous score," says Carl Davis. "So I thought I'd call the estate and see if they'd agree to let us use it in our revival." The Rombergians, however, were no happier



Carl Davis: 'We're emphatic that we're not a museum – we try to bring films to life'

Kalpesh Lathigra

about the idea the second time around. "I started looking carefully at the film and found the titles were pervaded with musical references to other fabulous German songs – folk songs, drinking songs, university songs and duelling songs – so I decided that was the way in," he explains.

European film-makers such as Eisenstein issued their films with specific scores, but Hollywood was a lot more free and easy

with its musical accompaniments, usually allowing cinema orchestra leaders to rifle through volumes of mood music to pick suitable matches to a sheet of cues. Carl Davis composes his sumptuous scores with the same spirit of free-ranging gusto. "We're quite emphatic that we're not a museum – we try to bring the films to life," he says. "For *Old Heidelberg*, you should feel you're in the lighter movements of a

Mahler symphony. It's late German Romantic music – lush and gorgeous."

Davis, who composed the music for the BBC's *Pride and Prejudice*, and is currently scoring Mike Leigh's new Gilbert & Sullivan biopic, is untroubled by critics waving the word "pastiche". "It's the name of the game," he says. "It's like working with theatre or ballet, you'll always incorporate a broader world of music into

your vocabulary. I was thinking recently about Tchaikovsky – in *Swan Lake* he had to write a Polonaise, a mazurka, a waltz, a Hungarian dance, a Spanish dance, all to the strict requirements of a choreographer. Of course, you can still be yourself, writing an Aida dance, or music for a low dance-hall scene. If you felt it was a strain, you simply wouldn't do it. My view is that the music is there to push the whole thing

forward and make the film more effective. Personally, I think it's quite a lot of fun."

'*Old Heidelberg*', tonight, 7.30pm, RFH, South Bank, London SE1. Carl Davis gives a free pre-concert talk, 'The Musical Sound of Silents' at 6.15pm (0171-960 4242). A season celebrating the centenary of Ramon Novarro continues at the NFT until 25 February (0171-928 2323).

Great minds think alike (unfortunately)

DID RICHARD Dawkins, that hard-boiled, free-ranging, egg-headed Darwinian, resident in the City of Dreaming Spires, where he is Professor of Public Misunderstanding, ever pose naked for Auguste Rodin in a church such as this one? I asked myself this as I stared around the Central Hall, home to British Methodism.

It was an august occasion. Dawkins was down on a quick away-day to engage in spirited debate with Steven Pinker about whether or not science was killing the soul. Thousands – a couple at least – were in attendance. Gages had been exchanged. Ants then, all of a sudden, the whole thing fell flat as a punctured balloon. It was at that point that I began to speculate upon

who Rodin's model for *Le Penseur*, and whether Dawkins, though seemingly youngish, could have been the chap: whether he had the muscles, the gravity, the embonpoint, the staying power for such a commission as that one? Whether, being a man of some eminence himself, he could have borne the tempestuous, hullying habits of Auguste Rodin...

Round and round it went in my mind, to the exclusion of almost all else, this small-scale, maddening obsession, like some crazed midge.

But why this, and not the subject of the debate itself? Because the affably bumbling and bespectacled science journalist who had introduced the two men to the audience, and the two men to each other, and the two men

DEBATE

RICHARD DAWKINS AND STEVEN PINKER
CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER

to the audience again, had mentioned, almost as if it were a matter of marginal importance – marginal importance indeed – that fundamentally the idea of a debate between these two men was something of an absurdity because, by and large, they agreed with each other. They both knew that there was no such thing as a soul, and no such person as a God. They both knew that science was killing, or had already killed, that absurd idea – if by word "soul" was meant some immaterial

entity, and not the pleasingly acceptable notion of soulfulness. They even felt perfectly comfortable to be voicing these brazen thoughts within reach of John Wesley's stern, admonitory finger which, cast in marble, lay in wait for them beyond the door.

And so, that was it then: in spite of the fact that they were both mature, dyed-in-the-wool Darwinians, they had nothing to fight about. It was not a debate, but a kind of long exchange of congratulations for having thought so long and so hard in the service of genetics (Dawkins) and cognitive psychology (Pinker), with a bit of mutual back-scratching here and there.

For this reason, somewhat distract and momentarily disappointed, I began to wonder whether

Dawkins, who when he sits or stands posed at the lectern, strikes such remarkably intellectual poses – finger on cheek, profoundly searching gaze into the middle distance, body curled forward with fist on chin, etc, etc; everything so beautifully posed and practised to create an overall impression that here is Pure Mind on the move – had soul or no soul, been here before, and that Rodin had perhaps snapped him up after one quick, impudent glance down the Metro car.

Away Dawkins had been led, by two or three burly studio assistants, frogmarched to the Rue Varenne, and then stripped down to the birthday suit.

The gravity was never in doubt – but did he measure up?

MICHAEL GLOVER

ARTS DIARY

DAVID LISTER

NOW HERE'S a phrase to strike fear into the most hardened aesthete: the opera supermarket. This disturbing vision of arts in bulk on a greenfield site comes from David

Pountney, former head of productions at English National Opera. Pountney is giving the Royal Philharmonic Society lecture on the future of opera tonight; and in a discussion I had with him for tomorrow's Radio 3 programme, *Music Matters*, he said he looked forward to the opera supermarket complete with cinemas and other entertainments, well away from city centres.

Pountney's radicalism doesn't stop there. He added that he could think of nothing worse than three-hour operas relayed on television. "It's the most dreadful TV," he says. But isn't it government policy to show more of these as a way of increasing access? "Yes," he agreed, "but that's just the sort of ignorant thing they would say. They should keep out of things they don't understand." You could warm to this man.

ANOTHER MAN to warm to is actor Paul McGann (below). He says he won't appear in any more theatre productions because of anxieties about performing in front of a live audience. He actually received rather good reviews for his performance in *Smoo Wilson's Sabina* at London's Bush theatre, but says the experience left him scarred: "I saw the audience piled on top of each other. They were clearly suffering."

This must be a first in theatre history. An

French director was accepting a short-film prize, he said: "Short film; short speech; thank-you."

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Hard habit to break

OPERA

DIALOGUES OF THE CARMELITES
SPITALFIELDS MARKET, LONDON

POULENC'S LAST operas could hardly be more different: *Les dialogues des Carmélites*, a grand opera about nuns, their spiritual sublimity threatened by a very French revolution; *La voix humaine*, a tiny monologue in which a woman tortures herself by repeatedly phoning her lover, who wants to cut the connection forever.

Political and religious torment in one, private crisis in the other; and women the fulcrum of both. Poulenc identified completely with his female protagonist, "Blanche", he said of the novice at the centre of *Dialogues*, "was me, and is still me." Far from being the carefree charmer of musical legend, Poulenc, at least here, plumbeth considerable personal depths.

You might think *La voix humaine* the more likely project for student performance, but Trinity College is nothing if not ambitious and, in Poulenc's centenary year, its staging of *Dialogues* (sung in English) showed its musical strength in depth: a large orchestra and a cast of dozens gave their all, and if the drama was intermittent, some of the fault may be the opera's. Where Poulenc saw saintliness in the nuns'

there, she finds Edel O'Brien's remarkable *Prioresse*, refusing to go gently into God's arms in a death scene of hair-raising intensity: a pity the libretto kills her off so early. Poulenc, though, wanted attention to focus on Blanche and here, in Ksenia Eremina Jones, he has a singer to watch closely. Her diction is clear, she acts well, and the voice is bright, even and expressive: ingredients, with a bit of luck thrown in, on which to build a solid career.

The performances benefited

from the precisely sculpted conducting of Andrea Quinn, who also ensured that the orchestra got the measure of Poulenc's ebbing, flowing dramatic pulse. Over the past four years, Trinity's performances at Spitalfields have added considerably to London's operatic life. A shame, then, that for yet more "retail development", the Market Opera building will shortly be demolished. As the rich get richer, culture gets poorer: a familiar story.

NICK KIMBERLEY

Further performance of *Dialogues*, Spitalfields Market Opera, 4-5 Lamb Street, E1, 7.30pm, Saturday 13 February, (0171-377 1362).

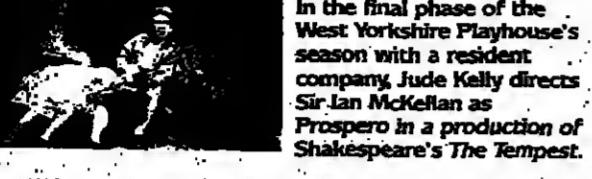
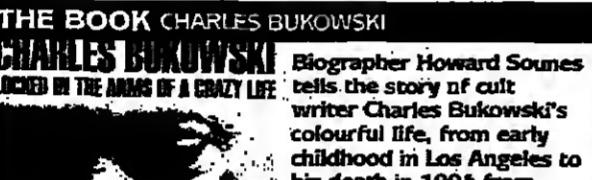
JOHN MADDEN did have a good answer, though, when asked how he would celebrate if he won the best-picture Oscar. "I'll take Spielberg out to dinner," he replied. That will make a memorably short acceptance speech, should he win. We're now in full acceptance-speech season, that time of year when we realise that the world's best actors can't muster a funny line between them. They should take note of a story told by Julie Christie at the Evening Standard Film Awards last

Sunday. When a French director was accepting a short-film prize, he said: "Short film; short speech; thank-you."

This must be a first in theatre history. An

"Short film; short speech; thank-you."

Short film; short speech; thank-you."

THE WEEK IN REVIEW				BY FIONA STURGES
EXCELLENT	GOOD	OK	POOR	DEADLY
OVERVIEW THE FILM YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS 	CRITICAL VIEW <p>"LaBute is so much in love with the idea of people's selfish, despotic ways that he has overreached his means of attack: he has all the poison, but no darts," reported Anthony Quinn. "Heartless, hollow and only sporadically funny," wrote <i>Time Out</i>, adding "It's hard to commend a film that's so insistently, even arrogantly, In love with the idea of hating humanity." The <i>Daily Mail</i> deemed it a "nasty satire on nasty people", but the <i>Telegraph</i> were impressed: "The film has the concentration of a stage play... LaBute's dialogue has vitriolic force, and his actors deliver it well." A state-of-the-art bulletin on the sex war," cried the <i>Financial Times</i>.</p>	OUR VIEW <p>LaBute's loathing of humanity extends to women as he reveals them to be as heartless between the sheets as men. But their turpitude may be too much for even the most hardened viewers.</p>	ON VIEW <p><i>Your Friends and Neighbors</i> is out on general release, certificate 18.</p>	
THE PLAY THE TEMPEST 	<p>"The production exerts a potent, if studiously uncharming, spell," wrote Paul Taylor, commending McKellen's "exquisitely calibrated, low-key performance". "A brooding vision simmering with dangerous magic," said <i>The Stage</i>, adding that it was "an absorbing <i>Tempest</i>, a tempest charged with excellence". "A strong start, but nothing that ful-</p>	<p>lows quite matches it," complained the <i>Financial Times</i>, while <i>The Times</i> was not convinced: "The production strikes me as irredeemably second-rate, and though McKellen's performance is sometimes weirdly mesmerising, it isn't the illuminating Prospero one had hoped for." "Not wholly satisfactory," concluded the <i>Daily Mail</i>.</p>	<p>McKellen skilfully conveys Prospero's struggle between rage and culpability in this stylised version of Shakespeare's play, though the magical isle as a correctional institution may aggravate purists.</p>	<p><i>The Tempest</i> is at the West Yorkshire Playhouse until 27 February. For bookings and enquiries call 0113-213 7700.</p>
THE ALBUM BLONDIE BLONDIE 	<p>"A powerful comeback... as much due to Jimmy Destri's ear for a surefire pop classic as it is to Debbie's bewitching reinvigoration," exclaimed Andy Gill, adding: "Even at a time when No 1 hits are as forgettable as ants, 'Maria' already sounds like you've known it for ever." "If the band sometimes wallow in nostalgia, theirs is a heritage worth re-ex-</p>	<p>ploring," pronounced the <i>Daily Mail</i>. "This merits cautious rejoicing... a pop goddess is still a pop goddess, after all," remarked <i>The Guardian</i>, while <i>The Times</i> observed: "a firm artistic rationale for the group's return to active duty." "No Exit may break your heart with its so-so, that'll-do, OK-ness, magic doesn't do encores," murmured <i>Uncut</i>.</p>	<p>After an embarrassing series of comebacks from Eighties icons, expectations were decidedly low. But Harry's band have created a contemporary sound that still bears all the hallmarks of classic Blondie.</p>	<p>Blondie's <i>No Exit</i> will be available in record shops from Monday.</p>
THE BOOK CHARLES BUKOWSKI CHARLES BUKOWSKI: LOCKED IN THE ARMS OF A CRAZY LIFE 	<p>"This biography is a thorough introduction that will not be rivalled for quite some time. Its effect is to revitalise rather than reduce Bukowski's work," decided Guy Manners Abbott. "The author does not neglect the solvent, humorous, sometimes sober, figure who eked out a living working as a mail-sorceror rather than turn to crime," noted <i>The Times</i>, while <i>The Guardian</i> were impressed: "This biography can claim to be the most definitive to date." "Bukowski's America is particularly well explored, with Sounes careful to dispel all lazy comparisons with Hunter S Thompson," wrote <i>The Observer</i>. "Powerfully researched" muttered the <i>Times Literary Supplement</i>.</p>	<p>Sounes refrains from indulging in the well-documented peculiarities of Bukowski's psyche, instead offering a straightforward account of the writer's life from birth to death.</p>	<p>Charles Bukowski: <i>Locked in the Arms of a Crazy Life</i> by Howard Sounes (Rebel Inc) is available in bookshops.</p>	
THE TV PROGRAMME VICIOUS CIRCLE 	<p>"Once or twice the film tread too heavily – at one point, we saw Cahill poleaxed by the beauty of a Goya portrait. But, by and large, Kieran Prendiville's script showed a commendable reluctance to draw morals... cool, intelligent, entertaining, and very welcome," Stott made a convincingly unpleasant Cahill, a cruel, clever, but dangerously vain man," revealed <i>The Times</i>, while <i>The Mirror</i> considered it: "a cops-and-robbers thriller with witty one-liners thrown in for light relief." "If it hadn't been based on real-life events it would have been totally unbelievable," cried <i>The Sun</i>. "As a thriller, <i>Vicious Circle</i> failed in its first duty – to thrill."</p>	<p>grumbled the <i>Daily Mail</i>.</p>	<p>Though occasionally lacking in subtlety, Prendiville's script avoided moralising, while Stott's crook was so likable that the plot could be seen as unbelievable, were it not true.</p>	<p>The BBC has no plans to repeat <i>Vicious Circle</i> at present.</p>

Fish, flesh and good red herring

WHEN YOU consider the phenomenon of *fin de siècle* brooding, you tend to think of the hock and seltzer-drinking classes, of wude, bearseye and interestingly soiled bedlinen in the Savoy. You don't automatically think of angry Cornish fishermen. Nick Darke's new play *The Riot* puts an exuberant bomb under such metropolitan parochialism. The piece is set in Newlyn in 1896, and everyone is terribly conscious of being on the brink of a new century.

"We got the nineteen undreds comin up," declares Thomas Bolitho, merchant, magistrate, mine-owner and mayor. "Do you want the nineteen undreds to pass ya by and dock in Plymouth?" His question is a classic case of the voice of self-

interest disguised in the accents of paternal solicitude.

The Riot dramatises a real-life dispute. The mackerel fishermen of Newlyn, all god-fearing Methodists, objected to the way their east-coast rivals were being paid to work on the Sabbath and to land fish, with the result that the prices were lowered for the rest of the week. The aggro (which included the tipping of 100,000 mackerel into the harbour) escalated and turned into a deadly battle between rival towns. The army had to be called in.

In Mike Shepherd's vibrant production, the piece is performed by Cornwall's crack Kneehigh Company whose brand of physicalised, bracingly irreverent ensemble work

was last seen in London when they brought Darke's *King of Prussia* to the Donmar Warehouse's 1996 "Four Corners" season. Now this highly skilled outfit, which specialises in site-specific performances on cliff-tops and in quarries, has linked up with the National to push home the point that Miro remarked, "To be truly universal, you must be truly local".

A dark-edged agit-prop romp which replays these grim events as buoyant bloody farce. *The Riot* is very much to my taste. So it feels a bit un-

grateful to confess that I kept wishing that, instead of importing the show into the Cottesloe, the National had organised a fleet of buses to take London punters down to see it outside *in situ* in Penzance.

Still, this is very much the next best thing. With Brechtian Methodist hymns at the harmonium infiltrated by tribal drumming and assegai rattling, it's a play in which the events in Cornwall are shadowed by parallel unrest in colonial Africa, to which many local miners were forced to emigrate because of pit closures. Not that there's any shortage of knockabout culture-clash on the home front. Darke shows how, when the female stonebreakers were put out of work, they sought employment

as domestics in the homes of the very toffs who had dispossessed them. And pipe-smoking profanity was not the first thing the nobles were looking for in a maid.

With an elderly mother played as a bombezzled drag act, mock-death staged with the aid of tomato chutney and an eleventh-hour reprieve for capitalism as it stands with a noose round its neck on the gallows, *The Riot* could certainly be said to subscribe to the cock-up theory of history. I think it would be a lovely gesture if the National were to invite The Lord's Day Observance Society to a special Sunday performance.

PAUL TAYLOR

Booking to 10 April (0171-452 3000)



The Riot: a dark-edged agit-prop romp
Geraint Lewis

The world's greatest jumble sale

ONE MIGHT hope that Manhattan would be untouched by this winter's anti-urban and somewhat depressing new trend, shopping online. But lately New York's fashion class has started looking online at the Web auction house eBay for what they call "Eames-era" drinking glasses, thrift-store paintings and rarely worn Tocco dresses. "It is fashionable in New York circles," says Judith Newman, a New York-based writer who recently documented her obsession with eBay in *The New York Times*.

"I like it for its anonymity. I'm a mild-mannered, passive person, but on eBay I become a shopping warrior," declares Newman. "Men like it because they can collect according to their mania without feeling precious and 'arty'."

On eBay, one can sell anything, as long as it's legal and the company takes up to five per cent of each sale.

One can bid on the hundreds of thousands of objects on the site, and the highest bidder wins. The company claims that there have been 155 million bids on over 40 million items in just over three years.

"My friends are mostly New York writers and they shop on eBay," says Nancy Kalish, a Brooklyn writer who spends two hours a week on it.

"We talk about bidding strategy, debating whether or not it's better to come in strong early in a bid."

Upper East Sider Diane MacFarlane hangs around eBay's Jewelry Chatroom, and Jerry Spiegler, a New York Media attorney who collects mid-century Italian and German art pottery, logs on constantly to search for additional pieces of work. He's bought nearly 300 items in the last year and a half.

But what does it mean, now that Newman and the rest are exhibiting

voice for Abelard: the tremulous whining of someone who'd been forcibly prevented from committing further sins, but who suspected he may be sent to Hell all the same. Meanwhile, Lynsey Baxter was suitably contrite as Heloise, wailing desperately that she was "the wretched woman in Christendom". Yes, well if the two of them had had a little more self-control they wouldn't have got into trouble in the first place.

Keeping men and women separate was just one of the functions of workhouses in 19th-century Britain. When Honor Dickenson was caught throwing bread to her husband over the wall that divided them, she was sentenced to six hours in a punishment cell. *Life in the Workhouse* (Radio 4, Monday) told this and other stories of

NEW YORK DIARY



ALISSA QUART

their collectivism at this on-line jumble sale? What of New York's real streets teeming with antique stores and markets? After all, in what was once Manhattan's Little Italy and is now New Nolita, you can find the same

eastral 60s lamps, bad amateur paint-

ings and Mason jars cheaply and unironically, and I stare at the photos of green plastic lamps in someone's house in Virginia with a co-optive zeal.

Kalish says that her best deal was buying a Mission-style mirror "from a woman in Kentucky for half the price it would have cost from an antique store." Spiegler, meanwhile, wound up buying some post-war pottery on eBay for \$40 from a native seller before making a tidy profit by reselling it in the virtual auction house for \$200. It took a New York freelance journalist named Todd Levin to bring irony to eBay. Recently, Levin attended an award ceremony for the Cool Website of the Year, and collected eBay's prize for "coolest shopping site," though he had no relation to the company. Levin then sold eBay's award – on eBay itself.

eBay is at: www.ebay.com

One man and his mike

COMEDY

ADAM BLOOM
GASLIGHT CLUB
PETERBOROUGH

12 reasons why, and they showed me all ten of their fingers."

With shades of Phil Kay, he soon had the confidence to plunge into the audience and conduct the show from a table-top in the middle of the room. He was even able to make light of the fact that he'd forgotten to bring his microphone from the stage. "It's like sex without a condom. So I probably won't last as long as I planned to."

He sealed the rapport with the punters by ganging up with them against a bloke who was harrumphing a mobile phone. Bloom ended up commanding it and offering advice to its owner about its dodgy reception: "Next time the phone company sends you a bill, write out a cheque and Tippex out every third word."

Beyond the banter, Bloom is also capable of more challenging material. At one point, he mused: "There's one subject that's never discussed in comedy, and that's disabled people" – this was greeted by silence – "and that's why."

Bloom was recently voted stand-up of the year by *Time Out* magazine, and greater things no doubt await him. His mainstream, cheeky-chappie persona would, for instance, be well-suited to hosting a BBC 1 game show. Didn't he do well?

JAMES RAMPTON
Adam Bloom is on nationwide tour until March

greatest of all London courtesans once said "Ooh, we had some fun." Another voice came from the side of authority. An elderly matron remembered going round the dormitories issuing a sweet here and a hug there. "We must have been very unpopular," she acknowledged. Not as unpopular as the unmarried mother of two who was determined to live in the married quarters. For some reason the married women didn't want her among them, but she won the day by wedging a one-legged man. After that, they had no choice but to accept her. The one-legged man, however, lived somewhere else.

The Marquis of Worcester, the Duke of Argyll, the Earl of Craven and the Lord Palmerston may sound like a list of pubs, but they were actually the customers of Harriette Wilson (1786-1855). The

Marquis of Worcester, the Duke of Argyll, the Earl of Craven and the Lord Palmerston may sound like a list of pubs, but they were actually the customers of Harriette Wilson (1786-1855). The

THE WEEK IN RADIO



MAGNUS MILLS

social deprivation, sometimes from the mouths of people who'd actually been born there. One old girl had done 41 years in the laundry, resulting in severe arthritis, but none the less sounded alarmingly jolly: "All the others have died, poor things."

THE BOOKS INTERVIEW

Fangs for the memory

Jeremy Seal travelled to confront his worst fear – but snakes still terrify him. By E Jane Dickson

Jeremy Seal is not the kind to travel hopefully. Indeed, for a travel writer, he shows a marked mistrust of the open road: "Tearing around a country and picking up on whatever strikes you as interesting smacks of desperation to me. The classic travel-writing model is driven by having to move on all the time, the implication being that if otherwise you run out of things to say, and I'm very suspicious of that. If you stay in one place and dig deeper, there is always more to write about."

Seal's first book, *A Fez of the Heart*, performed a kind of archaeology on the soul of modern Turkey, meticulously exposing layer after layer of cultural and political sediment. Bottomless curiosity, lightly worn scholarship and a ready stock of jokes drew comparisons between Bruce Chatwin and Seal as luminaries of New Travel Writing.

His second book, *The Snakebite Survivors Club* (Picador: £16.99), strays even farther from the classic travelogue in so much as it is less about a physical journey than an emotional odyssey. The subtitle, "travels among serpents", suggests the cane-shwishing derring-do of 19th-century explorers, a tradition the writer comprehensively subverts. Seal, you see, is scared of snakes.

"I've always had this thing about snakes; they exercise a particular kind of horror; that sense of being simultaneously fascinated and repulsed. And I'm particularly scared of them when I'm in snakey places."

Four snakey places – Africa, India, Australia and the rattlesnake belt of the American South – provide the settings for Seal's herpetological explorations, but the places are not the point. "The snakes are more important than the destinations I go to," acknowledges Seal. "I chose a multiplicity of settings because I wanted to show the universality of the hold snakes have on our imagination. Nobody is neutral about snakes; wherever you go in the world they have this mythological aura and they are used in so many different ways to define different attitudes to life."

The snakebite survivors Seal homes in on amply prove his point. There is the Alabama sect which handles rattlesnakes as a test of their fundamentalist Christian faith; then there are the white settlers in Kenya, pitching their colonial song-frogs against a culture in which snakes are "seen" by witch doctors to avenge evil; while Australians, who take the relatively uncomplicated view that snakes are pesky buggers to be knocked on the head; and the snake cults of Southern India, for which serpents are both death-dealers and divinities.

"I had to be selective," says Seal. "Mexico has a fascinating snake culture and so has the Far East, but I felt I had to keep to areas where English is widely spoken. To try and get to the bottom of how people feel about snakes in a language I don't properly understand would have been foolhardy."

There is no question of where Seal's sympathies lie. "When I first started researching this book, I wrote to a lot of people in the herpetological community for advice and a fair number of them wrote back and said, 'I'm really worried about what you're doing here, because I think you're going to demonise these beautiful creatures', and I thought, 'Well, you're absolutely right. They are demons.'

"I can see how much more enlightened and subtle and holistic the Indian attitude



JEREMY SEAL, A BIOGRAPHY

Jeremy Seal, 37, grew up in Devon and Somerset, the son of a naval officer. He taught English as a Foreign Language in Turkey before working as publicist and editorial assistant for Chatto & Windus. After 1989, when the

company's enthusiasts for books were replaced by "American marketing men", he says that he "knew it was time to get out". He is now a full-time writer. His first book, *A Fez of the Heart* (about Turkey), was published in 1995

and shortlisted for the Thomas Cook Award. *The Snakebite Survivors' Club* is his second title and he also writes travel articles for national newspapers. Jeremy Seal lives in Gloucestershire with his wife and daughter.

I love the way the cobra is redeemed in that country but emotionally I just don't buy it. I was shocked on the other hand, at how readily I accepted the whole serpent-as-Satan idea in Alabama. When it comes to snakes, I'm with the nutters."

The Alabama chapters of the book are accordingly charged with a particular power: Seal imaginatively recreates the sensational trial in 1996 of a snake-handling

zealot who tried to murder his wife by forcing her hand into a box of angry rattlesnakes. Seal's ear for dialogue and empathetic descriptions bring him bang up to the frontiers of fiction.

"I find myself pulled more and more in that direction," he says. "Every strand of my snake research revealed stories that were just crying out to be put in a novel. It was hard at times, to keep my focus."

"Focus" and "motive" are the watchwords of the New Travel Writing. *A Fez of the Heart* was a kind of forensic quest to find the last bona-fide fez-wearer in Turkey, and 300 years of Turkish history were illuminated as Seal charted the rise and fall of the brimless hat. (Brim = secularism in a country where you touch your forehead to the ground to pray.)

The snake, however, is a less discrete

metaphor, and marshalling a thousand and one references and resonances into a compelling yarn without once resorting to footnotes requires a particular, graceful talent. Fear is the driving engine, and Seal's applied fascination never falters.

In the course of the book, we are exposed again and again to the particular horrors of the world's most venomous snakes like some kind of literary aversion therapy. We gradually acquire an uneasy expertise with the habits and temperaments of the taipan, mamba, rattlesnake and cobra. But the awful mystery of these snakes remains intact.

"Before I set out, I went on a phobia management course at London Zoo", Seal recalls, "where a herpetologist comes and tells you that your fear is irrational and silly and then you all get hypnotised and trot round to the reptile house to make friends with the snakes. I stopped short of being hypnotised, because I had a strong feeling that if I lost my fear it would take away the motive for the whole book."

The preoccupation with "motive", he argues, is a modern necessity for travel writers. "People have started talking about 'quest travel writing' in the last few years, and it's a kind of pejorative title," says Seal. "It's as if the classic idea of travel writing is the venerable one and we are lazy young upstarts trying to cheat and find short-cuts. The old heroic mode of exploring foreign parts was about making a country your own, probably even giving parts of it your name. All travel writers had to do was turn up and keep a journal and they knew that people would be interested in what they said simply because it was new and exotic."

Apart from the best pair of snake boots money could buy (an acquaintance that provoked much ridicule in countries where everyone wears flip-flops) and an ashwood talisman (hermetic against snakes), Seal travelled with the minimum of professional paraphernalia. Even a notebook, he feels, gets in the way of the story. "I don't take notes," he explains. "I just remember all the best bits and then dredge them up months later when I sit down to write. I think it helps to let your material salt down for a while. Patrick Leigh-Fernor didn't write about his journeys until years after the event and that is some of the freshest travel writing I have ever read."

Seal refuses to become sentimental about the fact that some of the world's most impressive snakes are now top attractions on the tourist trail. The snake parks of Kenya, where his African chapters are set, are entirely geared to the local tourist economy. "Even today there is a style of travel writer who is loath to admit that mass tourism has happened, who wants to give the impression they are somewhere no one has ever been, and I find that vaguely dis Honourable. The entire point of modern travel writing is that the world is travelled."

Seal's theory will be tested by his next expedition, a mere two-hour jaunt down the line from Bath, where he lives with his wife and 15-month-old daughter, to the Cornish coast where he is researching an imaginative history of shipwrecks and their impact on the local psyche. The thought of having to machete his way through throngs of trippers to get to his subject does not depress him. Beyond the ice cream-and-chip shop lies Seal's *terro nova*. "Just because people are there," he insists, "doesn't mean that it's discovered."

PUBLISHERS WILL not want to be too up-front about it, but the coming months will see a steady repackaging of the Iris Murdoch oeuvre. Handily for Random House (which includes her hardback publishers Chatto), her paperback rights have all but reverted from Penguin; Vintage will publish her in soft covers. Meanwhile, Peter Conrad, an academic and long-standing friend, is at work on an authorised biography, which was bought by HarperCollins last autumn. Dame Judi Dench has been named as the actress who will play Murdoch in the screen version of John Bayley's touching memoir, *Iris*.

IT'S QUITE a relief to know that Sir Edward Heath, whose memoirs took such a long time to write, has been rewarded for his efforts (aside, that is, from the £350,000 odd Hodder added to his bank account). At the Channel 4/House Magazine Political Awards, the old curmudgeon beat off competition from, among others, Hugo Young and Douglas Hurd to win a glass statuette for Political Book of the Year – at least according to the customers at Politico's Westminster bookshop. Presenting the baubles, lanky newscaster Jon Snow confessed that he had first thought the book was called *The Curse of My Life*. The audience laughed but Heath remained impassive, appalled at yet another reference to the woman whom he refuses to call anything other than plain Mrs Thatcher.

P.J.S. THE trendy Covent Garden American-style restaurant, seemed an inappropriate setting for the launch of a book by one of Britain's greatest eccentrics, Dr Patrick Moore. His subject this time is Mars, which led one to speculate on the xylophonist's musical offerings: Bowie's "Life on Mars" or (more Moore's era) "Fly Me to the Moon"? Moore opted for his own compositions, released shortly on a CD from the Scottish National Orchestra. "It's coming out on my birthday," he told me excitedly, as his monocle dropped into his wineglass.

THE YEAR-END accounts of O'Mara Books make interesting reading. To March last year, sales grow from £2.9m to £3.17m; profit to £1.2m against a previous loss of £376,084. The reason? A Paris car crash which "freed" Andrew Morton to recast his Diana biography in her own words. O'Mara is pessimistic about the future of royal publishing; all his hopes are now pinned to Morton's collaboration with Ms Lewinsky. Will they wax lyrical about their shared love of TS Eliot?

THE LITERATOR

Please be my Virtual Valentine...

... but what happens when the passionate cybersex turns sour? Peter Jukes joins the community of online swingers who composed a dark romance in the digital domain

THE INTERNET is pure sex. Forget its notoriety for pornography; something much more interactive is happening. Probably the most prolific parts of the Web are its chat networks, in which strangers exchange small talk and then engage in more intimate contact: cybersex and online assignments.

The erotic potential of the Internet probably exceeds its commercial potential. Now used by women almost as much as men, it offers a dark space of disguises and metamorphoses, where meaningful glances are raised, where couples court and couple. The Tom Hanks/Meg Ryan movie *You've Got Mail* celebrates this journey from retail to romance. And Julian Dibbell's book shows how cyberspace became a clearing-house for desire.

Ostensibly a history of a pioneering online community, *My Tiny Life* is Dibbell's novellaised account of his own passionate obsession with virtual worlds, and its real-life repercussions with his partner. Her rival was LambdaMOO, a tiny virtual universe, carved out of text and computer code on a server in Palo Alto. Once opened to the Internet, hundreds of strangers started pouring in through its portals.

It is hard to describe this tiny text-based universe in linear



My Tiny Life
by Julian Dibbell
Fourth Estate, £16.99, 336pp

prose. By typing in commands you can move through descriptions of objects, rooms, streets – anything that can be constructed in words. Sometimes, these are animated in programmed subroutines, so that asking for a cappuccino can launch a mini prose-poem about its taste and effect. As you enter the author's own Garden of Forking Paths, a programme uses the I Ching to determine each direction. Most importantly, you can encounter other personas, such as exu, Niacin or Horton Who: characters who seem equally at home discussing Baudrillard as they are with computer code.

Though a species of journalism, this account of a factitious universe begins to feel like a picaresque novel by Rabelais rewritten by Pynchon and Tolkien. Unlike a novel, however, this fiction is a collective edifice, built by hundreds of individuals in a city of words.

Sex is a vital ingredient. The book opens with an account of a celebrated case of virtual rape, when the persona of "Doctor Bungle" used a voodoo doll to force other citizens to violate themselves in several graphic ways. His "crime" took place just after the historic decision of the Wizards (lead programmers) to drop their priestly powers. Instead of an

life". Dibbell's explores Tiny-Geography and has a foray into TinyGender with the adoption of a female persona, Samantha. As for TinySex, Dibbell holds back on his own long cybersex session with "S" until well towards the end.

One of the problems of turning a parallel and interactive world into a linear book is that the feeling of total immersion is lost. On line, you don't know where the next line is coming from; it emerges, letter by letter, with the hot press of speech. In cold text, the idiosyncrasies of the characters can seem false, and Dibbell's languorous style does not quite prevent some of their concerns seeming overwrought.

But he has a trick up his sleeve. While the VR world is described like a realistic novel, he renders RL (real life) in the same format as an online game. The staccato result is unexpectedly compelling, particularly when he describes his own inability to "commit" to his partner, Jessica, and she counters his virtual infidelities with real ones of her own. The quality of the writing is so potent at times, it makes you long for a proper novel by Dibbell.

My Tiny Life contains many thoughtful connections between virtual reality and its prototypes in maps or games. A

beautiful passage compares the fictional quality of the digital domain with the equally fictional notion of borders. Birds or grasses might not recognise these arbitrary squiggles on the map, but human culture does, and it goes on to reshape reality along its own lines.

Which brings us back to sex – perhaps the most contested bordering between biology and culture. Dibbell shows how they are hard to separate. His remote infidelity only serves to make him more aware of the preciousness of his partner. He chooses atoms over bytes, RL over VR, but the distinction is not always so simple to make.

William Gibson wrote the first novels about cyberspace over a decade ago; Dibbell's non-fiction book is the first novel by cyberspace. It certainly won't be the last. What new genres will engender is thence to Dibbell, clearer to see; they will be recapitulations of old genres.

My Tiny Life places cybersex in a continuum of erotic symbolism, going back through the epistolary novel at least as far as *La Roman de la Rose*. It shows how virtual desire is another variant of the convention of courtly love, with passion clinging to, but also trying to supersede, the insufficiency of words and images.

Signal failures for the paranoid producers

Nicholas Royle tunes in to trouble on the studio floor

CHRIS PALING is the literary authority on male breakdown and midlife crisis. He demonstrated this in his third novel, *Morning All Day*: a big step up from the flawed but enjoyable *Deserters*, which itself had the hard task of following the acclaimed *After the Raid*. Now, in *The Silent Sentry*, he picks through the wreckage of Maurice Reid's disastrous life, showing all the compassion we have come to expect but with added wit and a well-judged sense of comic timing. If there are fewer laughs, Paling's sense of humour does remain intact, making sure the effect of the concatenation of disaster is not always so simple to make.

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The Silent Sentry
by Chris Paling
Jonathan Cape, £9.99, 248pp

the machinations of colleagues. Why is fellow producer Ward suddenly behaving so oddly? What might his editor: "Peculiar" Edwards, be planning? Which way will Elaine, alternatively motherly and predatory, swing? Whom should Maurice trust with the rumours about presenter Roy May and a girl in a hotel room? Not Val, who pinched Maurice's wife and earns her crust in the tabloids.

The squidgy specifics of toilet-bowl realism – the filthy flat where Maurice rents a room, the tart he picks up in a pub, the bloody broken nose – are thrown into sharper relief by such beautiful ideas as Edwards's planned "White Symphony", an hour of radio

silence, and lovely images such as the smoke of a woman's cigarette trailing "over her shoulder like a steam train".

The novel is also richly textured with visual details of the audible medium: the blue haze and hue plug, big German tape decks, a "long, sleek flight deck with thirty faders". The level of verisimilitude is maintained when it comes to the producers themselves. Radio virgins entering a studio to be interviewed for the first time will be a little less naive if they have read Paling's novel.

The author, of course, works in BBC Radio, although the jacket blurb coyly fails to record the fact. It's an irony that will not be lost on him that any possible radio feature on his novel, which will no doubt be closely read by BBC producers, is unlikely to reach the airwaves. And if it does, and the powers that be catch Ray's *Front Row* in the limbo on the way home and hear what life is like down on the studio floor, who knows how much longer Paling will be working for the BBC?

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The men who sold the world

Where have all the spies gone? Into corporations, every one.
Christopher Hope is stirred, but not shaken, by the outcome

ONCE UPON a time, back in the Cold War when politicians ruled the world, they had a powerful claim on our attentions. They had the means to kill us all. And their secret agents - the "lonely deciders" as John Le Carré calls them in a telling phrase in his new novel - played a deadly game. The stakes were high: peace, or mutual assured destruction. Even so, there was a settled quality to things: "we" were here and the "Sovs" were there. In between the parties moved the secret go-betweens in their melancholy grandeur. In the Cold War, spies were hot; they made news, they made war, they made great fiction.

Then the world changed. The Berlin Wall fell, the Sovs collapsed and things were never the same. Anyway, the record suggests that real spies were pretty duff at the real thing. When the Wall came down the secret watchers were as astonished as the rest of us.

On Russia, their record is even worse. They missed what was staring them in the face. Any interested visitor, walking about in Moscow in the late 1980s, or sitting in Russian kitchens listening to the frantic talk of anguished Muscovites, felt that the show was over. Though the agency denies it now, the CIA billions never found that out, never walked in the streets, apparently never simply looked and listened.

It was Le Carré, about that time, who suggested with brilliant perversity that maybe the Russians didn't have what it took. In *The Russia House*, a book almost as savage as *Single & Single*, he put forward the notion that perhaps "the Sovs" were not really a nation of rocket scientists, all superbly toolled up and racing to run the planet.

That thought did sometimes occur to travellers holed up in the Ukraine Hotel, trying to fix an electric plug. But it was a detectable heresy in intelligence circles, where egos were as bloated as the hedge funds on which they thrived. In any case, the point about the Russians was that we needed them. Those people were some sort of solution.

Then the Empire flew apart. So who runs the world now? Or, put it this way: who is as venal, merciless, crooked as the power-brokers on both sides? *Single & Single* points us to the financial buccaneers, the bankers, brokers, the boys in bright braces dealing in complex financial



Single & Single
by John Le Carré

Hodder & Stoughton £16.99, 336pp

instruments. Where have all the spies gone? Into corporations, every one. After the Cold War, cold-hearted commerce is king. When the hedge funds waltz, babies starve. When currency speculators move in, nations go to the wall.

Enter Tiger Single, creator and master-spirit of the venture-capital house of *Single & Single*. Tiger is jaunty, charismatic, arrogant, crooked, instantly recognisable and utterly of our time; the essence of the corporate raider, the gallant asset-stripper.

Tiger's urge is great and simple: to convert the new Russia to the new capitalism. And the financial press - Le Carré has the fawning tone exactly - excitedly parrots his mission, his canting sermons on progress.

"The Greatest Challenge to the Commercial World today... is the birth of a market-oriented Soviet Union." Therefore the House of Single will be the "facilitator". It offers "solid long-term partnership without exploitation".

What it means is that Tiger Single plans to do for the old Soviet Union what George Soros did for world currencies. Or Nike for factory prices. Or Swiss banks for Jewish gold. If you thought the old days were bad, welcome to heaven as declared by the hedge funds, the universe run by money men, the men who put the "con" in economics. If the old political bosses happily offered to trade their mothers in the interests of "world peace", take a look at the floor of the bourses that was no more than we expected.

Tiger Single would deliver.

Le Carré parades for our delectation as convincing a line-up of prominent shits as ever read a balance sheet or restructured an economy. The novel opens when a corporate lawyer has his head blown off in a

grisly comic execution on a Turkish hillside. From there on it is all go: the action shifts between London, Russia, Dorset and the wilds of Georgia.

There is the Georgian Mafia, and former Russian spies turned entrepreneurs. There is all Le Carré's deeply satisfying detail. There is Tiger's son, Oliver, raised to run his dad's show when the old man steps down - and suddenly having doubts about Tiger's tender desire to save Russia for capitalism. When young Oliver beats the odious Swiss lawyer, Herr Stampfli, we cheer him on.

Tiger Single is a wonderful creation. He is not merely an insufferable bastard; he is rather likeable in his arrogance. Shaved by Trumper, shod by Lobb, phoney from start to finish. He is also, God help us, a missionary, out to convert the heathen - into profit. He is ready to trade in everything from human souls to good, clean Caucasian blood, from the vein of exhausted, bankrupt Russians. Le Carré has always drawn and felt his Russians superbly well: *Single & Single* does beautifully the madness, the greatness, the vodka, the dark heart.

There is Brock, the patient spy-master of *The Russia House*, now older and wiser. But times have changed and it shows. Brock has all the instincts of the Cold War controller of agents in the field. But his new role as a kind of super-sleuth on the track of off-shore accounts and financial scams seems to fit him as uncomfortably as the customs uniform he so seldom wears.

Single & Single is, one comes to realise, a kind of revenge comedy. This is the new world order and Le Carré kicks it around very satisfactorily. But there is a limit to how excited you can get about offshore holdings.

Money-laundering and money grubbing are dull. We may be appalled by Tiger Single and his innovative ways of making a killing, but we are hardly surprised. When W H Auden remarked, of the brokers, that they spent their time roaring like beasts on the floor of the bourse that was no more than we expected.

The trouble now, so Le Carré suggests, is that men like Tiger Single have leaped right out of the trading floor and into the pulpit, preaching the New World Economic Order. Nowadays, runs the gloomy thought that underpins this wonderfully



Commerce is king in Russia now that the Cold War is over

Paul Masson

angry novel, when the world's business élite meet in covens like Davos at the annual World Economic Forum (here lightly disguised as "an informal German Lakeside seminar for serial unmentionables") Tiger Single will be there, driving the big courtesy Audi around in the snow.

What the folks who brought you the New World Economic Order failed to mention is that they are it. And anything that goes

- goes. Behind them are the dealers in derivatives, the hedge fund managers, the private bankers. Complex financial instruments are used to club the enemy into submission. This is war. Tiger Single is what we have coming to us. Be frightened, runs Le Carré's underlying message in *Single & Single*.

It may be true. But, somehow, the news that balance-sheets have taken over from

the balance of power is not enthralling. I was more frightened, before. The finger on the nuclear button wins every time against the hand in the till. Mutually Assured Destruction beats Money Laundering any day. Bring back the Sovs, I say.

Christopher Hope's new novel, *Sins of the Heart*, will be published by Macmillan in June

How Plato started the fatwa business

A WEEK IN BOOKS



BOYD TONKIN
Dame Iris can account for Rushdie's plight

ALL WEEK, the tributes have rolled in for a writer who drew on creeds of every kind in her bold investigations of belief and unbelief. And tomorrow marks a full decade since another novelist, who tried to pull much the same trick, suffered a state-sponsored threat of execution. Iris Murdoch's obituaries have taken it as read that a career spent composing tall stories on the margins of other people's cherished faith - or lack of it - merits respect. Dame Iris herself did no such thing. Indeed, her books gleefully depict figures who (give or take a few twists of history) could not only support the *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie, but cheerfully carry it out.

Murdoch argued so hard for the fearless art of fiction because, as a philosopher, she knew that most of the world's leading doctrines detested it. She grasped the force behind the ancient critique of imitative art as an irresponsible game with truths that lie too deep for tales. Forget the wrangles over "blasphemy", and that

critique drives Rushdie's more rational antagonists.

Murdoch makes a superb advocate for a fiction free of priestly - or political - interdict only because she can voice the other case so well. The best commentary on the core assumptions that fuel the Rushdie "debate" if debates can happen with a gun at one side's head can be found in her great exposition of "why Plato banished the artists", *The Fire and the Sun*. This account of Plato's notorious urge to censor and control all art is reprinted in *Existentialists and*

Mystics, the rich hoard of Murdoch essays that Peter Conradi edited in 1997.

Artists, thought Plato, make mischief with religion they "portray the gods as undignified and immoral". Art "apes the spiritual", and subtly "trivialises" faith. It teaches a "spiteful amused acceptance of evil", and lures us into preferring shadows over substance. That metaphysical loathing for storytellers or actors has shifted very little over the past 2,500 years.

Now, Platonism suffused aspects of Islam almost as much as it did Christianity. Akbar Ahmed's new survey of *Islam Today* (G B Tauris, £9.95) points out that some Muslim scholars call Plato a secondary "prophet", who spread God's word. So a punitive fury at irreverent fictions grows not from alien superstition, but from the dark heart of "western" culture. Murdoch saw, and explained, all this with a bracing wit and clarity.

Which is why we can mourn

a truly illuminating thinker, as well as a spellbinding teller of tales.

A satirical wizard from Oz

Lachlan Mackinnon wishes a fine poet a happy 70th birthday - and curses his publisher

POETRY. PETER PORTER has written, "is paid to distract us, / to tell the man disappointed by his mother/ that he too can be a huge cry-baby". Porter's own mother died when he was nine, and her ghost stalks much of his earlier work. However, these lines appeared in *The Cost of Seriousness* (1978), in which Porter confronted the suicide of his first wife. Even the hostile Craig Reina admitted it had moments of "great poetry", and I am not the first reviewer to draw attention to the lines:

*I owe a death to you - one day
The time will come for me to pay
When your slim shape from
photographs
Stands at my door and gently
asks*

*If I have any work to do
Or will I come to bed with you.
Repetition does not fire this
memory;*

*Porter's ability to reach for it through grief and
anger was an achievement
needing only the simplest
words to be made memorable.*

Simplicity, however, has rarely been Porter's strong point. Since he arrived from Australia on 19 February 1951, three days after his 22nd birthday, Porter has made himself an

uncomfortable part of the English cultural furniture. As a poetry reviewer with a rather narrow taste, a critic of opera and music and book-reviewer, he has dissented from much fashionable rubbish, but as a poet he has never quite been assimilated. His early work was predominantly satirical, vexed by the insouciance of the inheriting classes. I remember reading his derisive line about the young returning from London to their ancestral homes, "the bongos fading on the road to Haslemere", in a public-school study near Godalming the air thick with rock, and feeling Porter didn't understand his adopted country. 25 years later, I fear he was right than I.

Porter's accuracy came out of a remarkable autodidacticism. Having no university education, he set out to master European art with the hunger of an earlier passionate tourist, TS Eliot. Unlike Eliot, he was as engaged by the minor as by the major, which makes the frame of reference of his poems unusually wide. One often wonders whether the most apparently passionate utterance should be attributed not to the

knowledge". Porter's distaste for the academic is voiced with equal humour, as in his vision of critics singing hymns to old humanity, the gods that rise in rivers, shepherds calling to their flocks across a sculpted quadrangle.

Only find one poem in these nearly 800 pages in which Porter lets his evident lyrical intent loose, "Waiting for Rain in Devon". In *Spirit in Exile: Peter Porter and his poetry* (1991), Bruce Bennett tells us that this refers to the drought of 1976, which the poem does not say. This brief piece ends:

Something has emerged from dreams

*to show us where we are going,
a journey to a desolate star.*

*Come back, perennial rain,
stand your soft sculptures in
our gardens*

for the barefoot frogs to leap.

The omnipresence of death is a frequent topic; "soft sculptures" must make us think of Claes Oldenburg. The allusion is easy though, and rapidly gathered into the sensory immediacy of "barefoot". If one were to attack Porter's work, it would be by saying that all too often his moral and cultural re-

sponsibility has exacted "The Cost of Seriousness" and that here, for once, it does not.

I do not make such an attack. Rather, I want to praise the intelligence, variety, humanity and sheer interest by which most of these poems live. Their occasional limitations reflect the pressures of the age as much as the author's imperfections. Equally, the misprints which litter the second volume are, I suspect, his publisher's fault as much as his.

This ample boxed set will be the last significant publication of poetry by OUP, which has decided to abandon contemporary verse. Buy it now, as the Press is unlikely to reprint it. If you would rather read about Porter than read him, you can wait, as Oxford is keeping Bennett's critical biography in print. Oxford is, it seems, happy to make money out of this major writer's work so long as it doesn't actually publish it. Academic parastatism rarely walked so naked. Porter's attack on English culture is vindicated by the contempt "his publisher of death for 40 years" (as OUP puts it) has shown for the art he has served so well - and, indeed, for him.



Collected Poems
by Peter Porter

Oxford University Press, 2 volumes, £25. 404 & 384pp

author but to a character: say, a minor 18th-century composer. Anyone who calls this elitist misses the point: Porter has trudged the galleries, heard the records and done the reading. If we don't, so much the worse for us.

That Porter and his characters are hard to tell apart is a consequence of his lack of dramatic imagination. To compensate for this, he uses allegory, and often we find abstractions taking on unusual vitality. In "The Golden Age of Criticism", Porter finds that "among the factories of Arcadia some are working/ at packing time into its crates of

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INSPIRATIONS
WRITER BILL BRYSON

The music I almost never listen to music. I'm about the least musical person I have ever encountered. I like silence, even on a long car journey. But if I'm doing a big spring-clean I might put on a Jimi Hendrix album and listen to a couple of tracks very loud. I particularly like the song 'Red House'.

The film
The Wizard of Oz directed by Victor Fleming. I think it's underrated in all kinds of ways. Technologically it was wonderful, the story inspired and it was perfectly plugged into a childlike mentality. It's the only children's movie that I've seen that's genuinely scary for children. Every time I see it it takes me right back to my own childhood and leaves me with a residual disappointment in a lot of movies because if they could realise imaginary places so well half a century ago, why can't they do a better job now?

The place
Home, Hanover, New Hampshire is quintessentially American. It's where my real bed is, where my wife and kids are. I've been away a huge amount this year. It's not where I'd

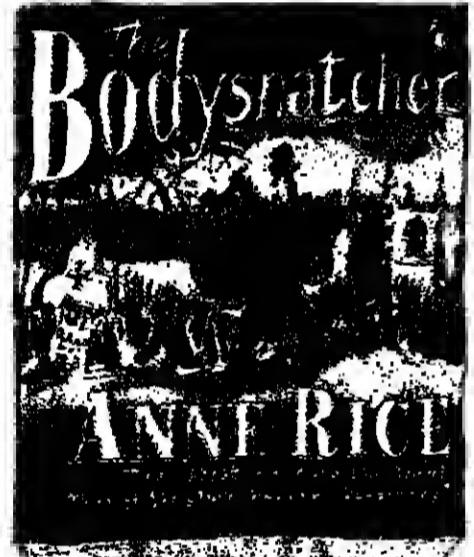


want to stay 365 days a year; it's not that stimulating but I'd certainly like to spend a couple of hundred days a year there.

The artwork
The work of a good friend of mine, David Cook. He does all kinds of stuff (including my book jackets). I admire his way of seeing the world. He draws a tea towel hanging on a washing line, a rumpled bed or a cup and saucer in exquisite detail.

The play
Christmas pantomimes. Sometimes Britain does something so completely unexpected and off-the-wall and pantomime is the perfect example of that. I love the way they drop in jokes that go over the kids heads but which the adults enjoy. We always come back to Britain at Christmas and go to the panto.

Bill Bryson's 'Notes from a Big Country' is published by Doubleday, £16.99.

ERRATA
by FELIX BENNETT

THE PAGES HAVE BEEN INNOVATIVELY INFUSED WITH THE STENCH OF DAMP EARTH AND DECOMPOSING CLICHÉS.

BESTSELLERS

John Grisham's domination of the thriller market cannot be in any doubt. *The Testament* has entered the list at number one (as has the paperback of *The Street Lawyer*, published in the same week although not recorded in

our new fiction list). Bill Bryson is the travel list this week, aided, as ever, by a TV tie-in, while Ted Hughes continues to outsell pop psychology and cookery books. Michael Smith's *Station X* is the biggest riser in the non-fiction list and a

new entry, *The Year 1000*, examines life in YIE: wolves and ravaging hordes were the millennium bugs of their day. Compiled by Bookwatch on sales over seven days ending 7 February 1999 © Bookwatch Ltd, 1999

ORIGINAL FICTION

TITLE	AUTHOR/PUBLISHER	PRICE	WEEKLY SALES
1 (-) <i>The Testament</i>	John Grisham (Century)	£16.99	5,986
2 (9) <i>Come Together</i>	Josie Lloyd & Emlyn Rees (Arrow)	£5.99	5,670
3 (1) <i>Southern Cross</i>	Patricia D Cormwell (Little, Brown)	£16.99	1,710
4 (5) <i>Liar Birds</i>	Lucy Fitzgerald (Black Swan)	£5.99	1,685
5 (3) <i>The Death of Amy Parry</i>	T R Bowen (Penguin)	£5.99	1,676
6 (7) <i>City Girl</i>	Patricia Scanlan (Bantam)	£5.99	1,528
7 (2) <i>Powerplays: ruthless.com</i>	Tom Clancy (Penguin)	£5.99	1,468
8 (4) <i>It Means Mischief</i>	Kate Thompson (Bantam)	£5.99	1,404
9 (-) <i>Messiah</i>	Boris Starling (HarperCollins)	£5.99	1,374
10 (6) <i>Tiffany's Secret Diary</i>	Kate Lockett (BBC)	£4.99	864

ORIGINAL NON-FICTION

TITLE	AUTHOR/PUBLISHER	PRICE	WEEKLY SALES
1 (1) <i>Birthday Letters</i>	Ted Hughes (Faber)	£14.99	3,730
2 (2) <i>Men Are From Mars...</i>	John Gray (Thorsen)	£8.99	3,401
3 (9) <i>Station X: codebreakers</i>	Michael Smith (Channel 4)	£14.99	2,704
4 (4) <i>Little Book of Feng Shui</i>	Lillian Too (Element)	£1.99	2,147
5 (5) <i>The Little Book of Calm</i>	Paul Wilson (Penguin)	£1.99	1,809
6 (6) <i>Seafood Odyssey</i>	Rick Stein (BBC)	£18.99	1,784
7 (7) <i>Notes From a Big Country</i>	Bill Bryson (Doubleday)	£16.99	1,684
8 (8) <i>Della's How to Cook</i>	Della Smith (BBC)	£16.99	1,294
9 (-) <i>The Little Book of Sleep</i>	Paul Wilson (Penguin)	£1.99	1,212
10 (-) <i>The Year 1000</i>	Robert Lacey & Danny Danziger (Little, Brown)	£12.99	1,152

TRAVEL

TITLE	AUTHOR/PUBLISHER	PRICE	WEEKLY SALES
1 Notes From a Small Island	Bill Bryson (Black Swan)	£6.99	6,639
2 Neither Here Nor There	Bill Bryson (Black Swan)	£6.99	1,726
3 Notes From a Big Country	Bill Bryson (Doubleday)	£16.99	1,684
4 A Walk in the Woods	Bill Bryson (Black Swan)	£6.99	1,212
5 The Lost Continent	Bill Bryson (Black Swan)	£6.99	744
6 The Lost Continent	Bill Bryson (Abacus)	£6.99	496
7 Lost Continent & Neither Here Nor There	Bill Bryson (Secker)	£9.99	218
8 From the Holy Mountain	William Dalrymple (HarperCollins)	£8.99	213
9 Round Ireland with a Fridge	Tony Hawks (Ebury)	£9.99	142
10 The Field of the Star	Nicholas Luard (Penguin)	£6.99	105

PAPERBACKS

BY EMMA HAGESTADT AND CHRISTOPHER HIRST



On Giant's Shoulders
by Melvyn Bragg
Sceptre, £7.99
366pp

IT'S HARD to see how this volume, based on a Radio 4 series, could be improved on as an introduction to science. A dozen scientific greats, from Archimedes to Einstein, are dazzlingly illuminated by successors working in the same fields. We learn that it was Galileo who first insisted on the power of maths ("without it, one is wandering about in a dark labyrinth") and the key thing about the "deeply unlikeable" Newton was his realisation that both the falling apple and the captive moon obey the same law. Sparks fly between contributors on Darwin. This is science told with passion.



SET ON the talcum-soft sands of Angel Beach, Guy Kennaway's satirical portrait of life in a small Jamaican community ripples with humour and crystal clear seas. Like a sunny Garrison Keillor, Kennaway recounts the personal dramas of the town's leading players over half a century. Jackie, a beautiful prostitute who seduces a well-meaning innocent for his British passport; the tale of "Shepherd Bush George" and his disastrous experience as a football linesman; and the mysterious powers of Sandra and her "bumpa boffy". Like Keillor, Kennaway's prose is even better read aloud.



Magnum
by Russell Miller
Pimlico, £12.50,
324pp

AT ANY time, there are 500 photographers struggling to join the 50 snappers who make up the Magnum photo agency. While lauding Miller's superb account, you wonder why they bother. Newcomers have to endure a two-year novitiate before joining a ramshackle outfit described by an ex-member as "amateurish, erratic and inefficient". Bitter words are not uncommon between colleagues, not least Cartier-Bresson's view of grunge specialist Martin Parr: "You are from a completely different planet."

The Lover's Companion

edited by Elizabeth Jane Howard, Pan, £7.99, 262pp

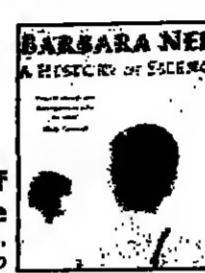


WORTH READING as much for Elizabeth Jane Howard's elegant editorial asides on love and literature as for the anthologised passion in store. Howard has plumped for love at its most thrilling - extracts from *Wuthering Heights*, *First Love and Anna Karenina* - and period pieces from Nancy Mitford, Elizabeth Taylor et al. Defending the joys of "vicarious pleasure", Howard attacks that "nasty highbrow theory" that romance is for losers. A sucker for the Tudors, she includes the full lyrics of "Greensleeves" and Henry VIII's letters to Anne Boleyn.



Three Miles Down
by James Hamilton-Paterson, Vintage, £7.99, 296pp

AFTER HIS paean to the oceans *Seven-Tides*, the aquatically-obsessed Hamilton-Paterson was invited to accompany an attempt to recover \$83 million in gold from two ships on the Atlantic sea-bed. Though he applies his novelist's skills to the characters aboard the Russian ship hired for the expedition, H-P admits, "Science is so much more interesting than literature, it's really quite shocking." The highlight of the book is when he wangles a trip to the depths: "Wonderful beyond anything I've ever seen before, spectacular ungodded." No gold was found, but H-P brought back a book of great riches.



SPOKEN WORD

CHRISTINA HARDYMENT



Naked She Lay: an anthology of classic erotic verse
Noxos.
2hrs 30mins. £6.99

FORGET THOSE silly cards. Here are two spoken-word offerings that would be perfect St Valentine's Day gifts. Anthony Anderson's selection of amorous verse is eclectic and unusual, offering some familiar delights (Wyatt's "They flee from me that sometime did me seek", Herrick's "A sweet disorder") but many more unfamiliar new treasures.

Arrangement is typological rather than chronological, which allows for telling effects as a 17th-century Chinese poem bumps up against Byron. Naxos effectively juxtaposes music with readings, providing tasters of Grieg's *Erik*, Sibelius' *Der Liebestrank* and other aptly romantic strains.



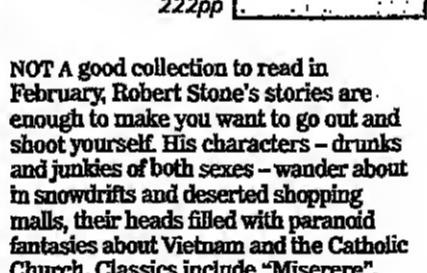
A History of Silence
by Barbara Neill, Pan, £5.99, 297pp

ROBBIE HEATH, a successful London physiotherapist, has spent most of her twenties taking care of her ageing mother and vulnerable older sister. In an attempt to break away from this intense family trinity, she accepts a position in the States, and flies off to Louisiana to take care of a rich old gentleman (and his antebellum mansion). It's not long before mother and sister turn up in New Orleans to join in the fun. Child abuse and its toxic legacy lie at the heart of this disturbing and atmospheric novel, but Neill nimbly avoids the subject's more usual clichés. Author of *The Possession of Delta Sutherland*.



Hitler's Secret Bankers
by Adam LeBor, Pocket, £7.99, 400pp

THIS INDICTMENT of the Swiss bankers who benefited from the "holocaust bonanza" makes painful reading. We learn that "whether gold was of monetary quality or dental grade, it would always find a home in Swiss banks". Deposits made by Jews killed in the death camps were not returned to relatives for over 50 years because they had no death certificates. Other Swiss organisations who took Nazi booty ranged from Bally Shoes to the Red Cross. Swiss bankers are making restitution, but LeBor notes they charge 100 francs for tracking down an account.



Bear and His Daughter
by Robert Stone, Picador, £6.99, 222pp

NOT A good collection to read in February, Robert Stone's stories are enough to make you want to go out and shoot yourself. His characters - drunks and junkies of both sexes - wander about in snowdrifts and deserted shopping malls, their heads filled with paranoid fantasies about Vietnam and the Catholic Church. Classics include "Misere", the tale of two women who steal aborted foetuses; while the title story recounts how a drunken poet, visiting his daughter (also an alcoholic), finds himself at the wrong end of a loaded gun.



Theo's Odyssey
by Catherine Clément, Flamingo, £9.99, 576pp

seems to have an entrenched antipathy towards religion (except for Buddhism, which has dispensed with God).

One of the difficulties is that information about religion does not really explain its appeal. Spirituality is a slow, silent and disciplined appropriation of a tradition which gradually transforms the seeker's inner being, in rather the same inexplicable way as we are affected by an aesthetic cultivation of great painting or music. A chatty account of the abstruse debates about the divinity of Christ, for example, does not convey the moral, mystical and imaginative reasons for the adoption of this difficult doctrine: a stumbling attempt to express the universal conviction that the sacred is inseparable from humanity.

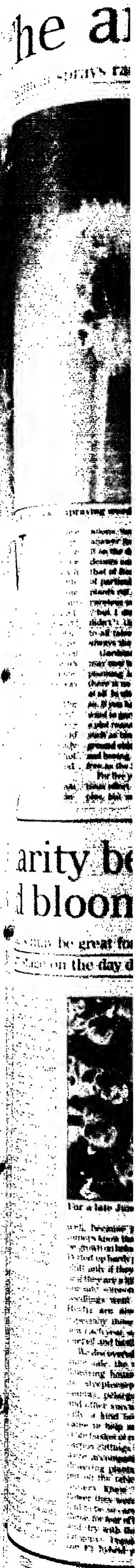
Theo seems to have arrived at an appreciation of the need for spirituality and, at the conclusion, has developed a positive vision of the essential unity of the various traditions. It is not easy to see how he has achieved this, however, since he seems constantly to defend himself from any real exposure to the sacred with a barrage of jaunty, cerebral reflections. It is also hard to understand why Aunt Martha insisted on this spiritual journey, since she



Whirling Dervishes perform their dance Mary Evans

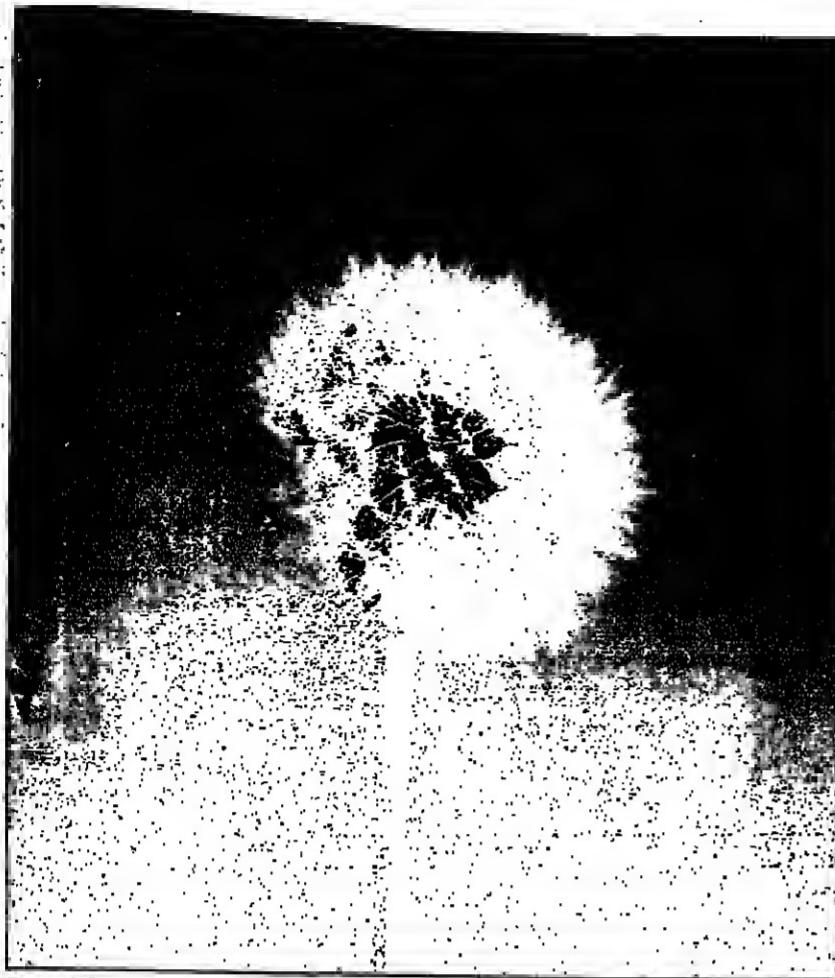
Clement remains determinedly on the surface. While she is careful to correct misapprehensions, some of her information is not wholly accurate. There are significant mistakes in the account of the history of Jerusalem, for example, and misplaced emphases in the stories of Judaism and Christianity. Much is made of the intolerance of monotheistic faith, but not enough of its commitment to compassion and justice.

Nevertheless, *Theo's Odyssey* will perform a valuable service if it introduces its readers to the essential harmony and deep similarity of the world's faiths. At a time of heightened religious militancy, it is important that people learn to take others' faith seriously, and that secularists, like Theo, begin to realise that religion may be more congenial and less alien than they imagine.

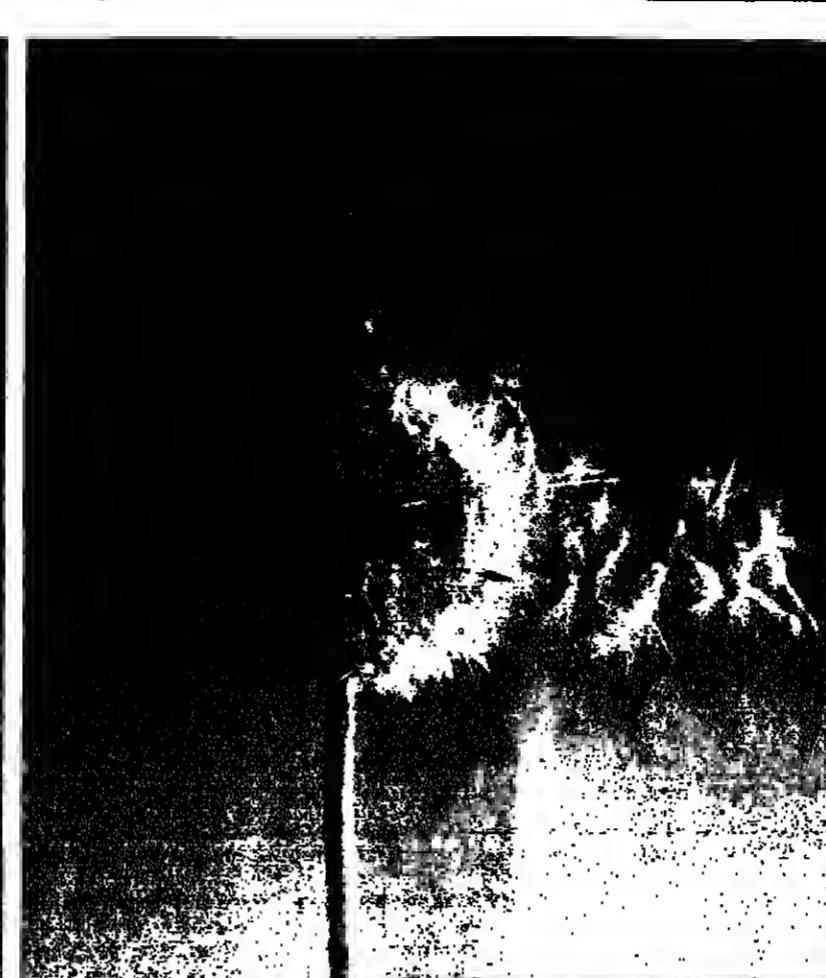


The answer is blowing in the wind

Chemical sprays radically cut down on the labour of gardening – but they can also be treacherous friends. By Anna Pavord



One o'clock, two o'clock... spraying weedkiller in your garden may save valuable time, but all such products must be used sparingly and with the utmost caution



Paul Windsor/GPL

Wherever more than one person gardens on the same piece of land, you will find the rumbplings of a great weedkiller row. Everyone has had one, and years after the event you can still inadvertently stir up an ancient quarrel by an ill-judged comment. Wandering around a friend's garden recently, I made some inconsequential comment about a pair of Irish yew trees I'd either side of an entrance, could not help noticing that one was at higher than the other.

"That's because he split the weedkiller," said my friend resentfully. Her husband's spill had been fatal to one of the pair and they had had to replant. The incident, already five years old, was still red-hot issue as far as she was concerned. "I've not healed this rift."

All round the gardening world you hear the echoes of similar recriminations. Sodium chlorate has a lot to answer for ("but I swear I only put it on the drive – honestly"). All gardeners can recite lists longer than that of Beachcomber's cabdrivers, of particularly choice and beloved plants cut down in their prime by a careless swing of the watering-can ("but I didn't see it spill; I really didn't"). Only one thing is common to all tales of weedkiller woe. It is always the other person's fault.

Gardeners of an organic bent may now be feeling very smug and planning letters pointing out that there is no need to use weedkillers at all. In ideal circumstances, this is so. If you have as much time as you want to garden and if you start with a plot reasonably free of real thugs, such as bindweed, couchgrass and ground elder, you can, by mulching and hoeing, keep the place as weed-free as the Sahara Desert.

For five years, I made a conscientious effort to stick to these principles, but in an acre and a half of

richly fertile garden, which had been abandoned for the previous 20 years, this was soon a losing battle. Every patch had to be won from a wilderness of briar, elder, nettle and dock and an army of lesser weeds.

When I went off to conquer new territory, the weeds quickly re-colonised my oases of planting. Then I found glyphosate and, in the best Mills & Boon tradition, thought I would live happily ever after. Set against what is available, my herbicidal armoury is minute. I do not use weedkiller on lawns, in the vegetable garden, among fruit trees, or round flowers and shrubs. It is used on the drive, some paths and paving, but its primary use (in the early days) was for clearing ground before planting.

In the end, the only feasible way to retrieve our bank from the wilderness was to concentrate on a strip at a time. Each year, between March and September, I treated one strip with glyphosate (Monsanto's Round-

up), spraying more than once where ground elder and bindweed were especially persistent. Only when the ground was absolutely clean did I plant it and move on to the next, adjoining strip to repeat the process. The whole thing took years.

I didn't dig the ground at all, but in the autumn planted among the corpses of docks and nettles. The aim was to plant each patch so thickly by spring, that weeds would have a hard time muscling back. Once cleared and planted, each patch was mulched heavily in autumn or winter with mushroom compost, leaf mould, grass cuttings, whatever I could lay my hands on.

The secret of low-maintenance gardening (and I discovered it the hard way) is to start with absolutely clean ground. It is difficult to achieve this by digging. Roots of ground elder, couch and bindweed will all sprout from the tiniest morsel left in the ground. As these roots are brittle there are usually plenty of

morsels hanging about like time-bombs, waiting to explode in spring.

Glyphosate is one of a group of weedkillers that are, in manufacturers' jargon, translocated and non-residual. Non-residual means that the weedkiller acts only on the weed and should not lurk about in the soil. Translocated herbicides are absorbed through the leaves of a plant and then pushed on down to the roots, killing the whole thing stone dead. Paraquat destroys only the green parts of a plant, so is more effective against annual than perennial weeds. Both are non-selective, which means that I could lay my hands on

to tell a dahlia from a dock.

Soil-acting weedkillers are more sinister: only to be used (and then only sparingly) in places where you do not want anything to grow ever again. These weedkillers are first absorbed by the roots of a plant, then sent up to kill the parts that are above ground.

The active ingredients hang

around in the earth to stop fresh weed seeds germinating. Dichlobenil (Casoron G4) and simazine (contained in Miracle's cocktail Pathiclear) are both non-selective, persistent weedkillers to use on drives, paths or paving which you want to keep weed-free for ever. But would these areas not be prettier if flowers were allowed to self-seed in the cracks?

At low dosages, the manufacturers suggest, both these preparations can be used to control weeds among established trees and shrubs. I have not tried this, as under the system I have now adopted, I can easily keep up with the weeds. Some shrubs – choisya, forsythia, cotoneaster, prunus and viburnum among them – do not take kindly even to low doses of simazine. Senecio, gleditsia, larch, elder and syringa are allergic to dichlobenil.

Both dichlobenil and simazine are best used in late winter; when, in cold, moist soil, their effect will persist for months. Contact weedkillers such as glyphosate and paraquat are most effective in summer when weeds are growing full tilt, with maximum leaf area to receive the spray.

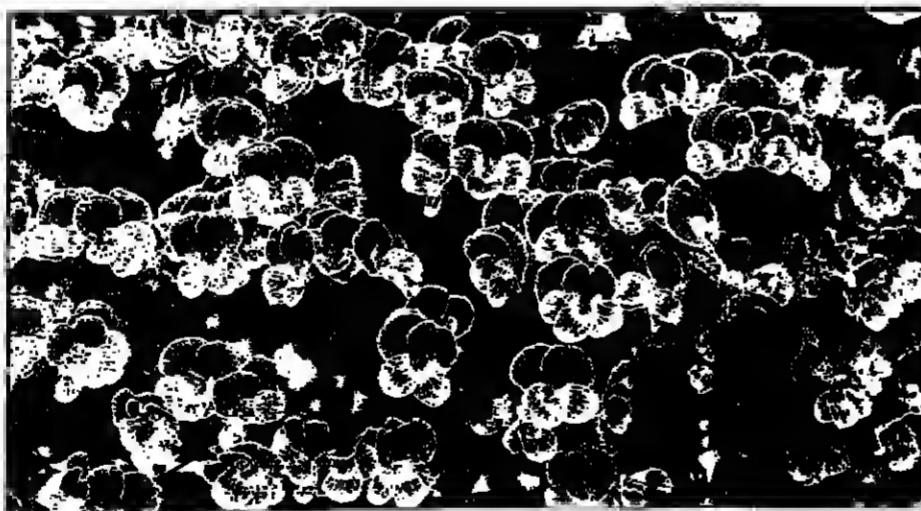
Glyphosate is especially lethal when weeds are flowering, and in late summer when roots are fat with stores for winter. Treat all weed-kills with caution.

Chemical giants such as Monsanto generally get such a bad press, that they are understandably bullish when it comes to defending their products.

A little while ago I wrote to Monsanto, asking for the most up-to-date research on the non-residual nature of glyphosate in the soil. I had used this weedkiller for several seasons to treat persistent weeds among some sheets of old daffodils. All the bulbs subsequently disappeared. I must have been using it while the daffodils' foliage was above ground, they replied. In August? They must be joking.

Charity begins at home... and blooms in the garden

Plant sales may be great for fund-raising, but having the right produce at the right stage on the day demands military planning. By Ursula Buchan



For a late June sale, pelargonium 'Swedish Angel' is a winner Adrian Thomas/A-Z

SURE as echeveria is echeveria, there comes a moment, if you are a keen gardener, when you get involved in growing plants to raise money for charity. Plant sales, large and small, are proven money-spinners (in comparison to white elephant stalls, at least) and, although they require commitment in terms of time, greenhouse and spare space, equipment and odd temper, they are great fun, well, in retrospect at least.

Last January, I volunteered to organise a plant stall for the church fete. What could be simpler, I thought? After all, I owned a couple of small greenhouses, one of which I could eat, and some cold frames, old bank on local good will and promises of pots and plants, and I had a burning desire to be useful, knowing that my hidden talents for making crafts and toys, not to mention chocolate cakes, were best if hidden.

I soon learnt that there are wrinkles to this business. It has to be planned as carefully as a military campaign. To begin with, you must take account of the date of the sale and draw up a timetable. There is always the anger of sowing seeds too early in a fit of understandable enthusiasm, only to discover that the plants are pot-bound and half-starved by the time they are required.

You have to grow plants that will, not necessarily those that you like, or are good at sowing. Tender annuals, for example, will not shift in late June, for many people will have bought them for planting several weeks earlier.

And you have to take account of changing attitudes towards garden-making. Rooted shrub cuttings, though excellent value, will probably not sell

well, because potential customers know that they need to be grown on before planting out.

Potted-up hardy perennials will shift only if they are in flower or if they are a little unusual; at our sale, someone's tree peony seedlings went like hot cakes.

Herbs are always popular, especially those you have to sow each year, such as parsley, chervil and basil.

We discovered that for a late June sale, the winners were flowering house-plants, such as streptocarpus, saintpaulias, pelargoniums, cast-iron and other succulents. Thankfully, a kind neighbour who came to help sell, brought a large basket of rooted streptocarpus cuttings in pots; these were accompanied by larger flowering plants, which were put on the table so that customers knew what colour flower they were getting. (We had to be so careful not to sell these, for fear of being left high and dry with their flowerless progeny). Popular, too, were the F1 hybrid pelargoniums,

which I sowed in the last week in January in heat, which were flowering fit to burst.

If you have promised to help at such an event this spring or summer, it is time to be thinking about how to go about it. You need to sort out which seed to sow, and what should be rooted from cuttings in spring; take note on seed packets of the time between sowing and flowering, and calculate back from the date of the sale. You need your dispositions sorted out. Can you feed, water and shade plants effectively? How much potting compost and how many modules and pots will you need? The majority will be 9cm or 10cm, unless you plan to pot up hardy perennials, in which case they may need to be at least 15cm. Square pots are better than round, as they are easier to "line out" and, later, easier to transport. Pots breed in sheds, like coathangers in wardrobes, so most gardeners are delighted to offload some of them on you.

On second thoughts, I think I'll restrict my efforts to raising money for the church roof. Where are you going to put

the plants? A single tray of begonia seedlings, when potted on, may translate into several feet of staging. If you don't want to heat a greenhouse much, see if you can buy plants in bulk from a wholesale nursery. Take account of the fact that all plants, for summer sales at least, need to be well "hardened off" before the day of the sale.

If you are growing for a "rare plant" sale, such as are organised by local groups of the NCCPG, things will be rather different. In some ways, these sales are easier, for you can expect the clientele to be quite happy to buy a pot with a few indeterminate stems or leaves in it, bearing no flowers. The only adamant requirements are that the pot should be distinctly and accurately labelled and that those selling should be able to answer the questions: "What does it do?" and, "When does it do it?"

On second thoughts, I think I'll restrict my efforts to raising money for the church roof.

CUTTINGS

NEWS FROM THE GARDENERS' WORLD



Fine Arts, who on 3 March will talk on the obsession of Catherine the Great (pictured) with all things English. All lectures take place at the Scientific Societies Lecture Theatre, New Burlington Place, London W1 and start at 6pm. Tickets cost £7 each or £35 for the six lectures in the series. For more information, or to book tickets in advance, contact Linda Wigley at the GHS, 77 Cowcross St, London EC1M 6BP (0171-608 2409).

BRIAN ALLIT, of Sudbury in Suffolk, writes with a comment on the Gardening Workshop on 28 November. "The worst feature shown in your picture is the mass of orange (not red, I think) brick in the back wall. Osmore Dale should try mixing some sieved soil into a bechamel consistency and rubbing it (with gloves!) into a sample of brick, allowing it to weather for a few days. If, as I think will be found, it mellows, then she can apply it to the whole area. It may even encourage lichen growth, especially if she adds a bit of fine oatmeal and natural manure. Rain will soon wash off the surplus."

ANNA PAVORD

as its theme Great Gardens of Europe. The season was launched earlier this month by Belinda Jupp, who talked about the rediscovered gardens of Belvedere in Co Westmeath. Other speakers include George Clark, who on 17 Feb explains the delights and difficulties involved in the restoration of the gardens at Stowe, and Dimitri Shvidovsky, vice-president of the Russian Academy of

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What's love got to do with it?

A long-awaited honeymoon in Mauritius was a chance to mix business and pleasure for Keith Richards and his new(ish) bride

In the lives of those of us who have chosen to marry, the one holiday you're guaranteed to remember is the honeymoon, if only because its grand title distinguishes it from every other holiday. For my wife, Heather and me there's something more to sustain the memory of our honeymoon in Mauritius, though.

We put on hold thoughts of cascading waterfalls in the Bamboo Mountains, Dodos, an unpronounceable airport and a range of mountains memorably called the Three Breasts. Instead, there was work to be done. Not for us the bon voyage perks offered by our luxury hotel - a trip on the "love boat" at sunset and an upgraded fish supper instead came a call, asking: "I know it's your honeymoon, but if I bring a couple of camera crews and some journalists to your hotel, could we hold a press conference?"

This place was a working paradise for us. The local food, recipes and culinary talents of Mauritius were under scrutiny by Heather, a commissioning editor of cookery books. And for me, a consumer law barrister at that time working for Which? magazine, I had a strong urge to investigate consumer rights on the island.

By the time we married, we had been living together for 15 years - it was worth the wait to be able to call our annual holiday a "honeymo-

moon". But indulging our other passions on our "working" honeymoon got us closer to the country and so made a special trip to that unforgettable island even more unique.

The request for a press conference had come from Jayen Chetum, Director of ACIM, the Mauritian Consumers' Association. I'd faxed ahead to tell him we were coming and he jumped at the chance of using me to advance the cause of his organisation. I, in turn, jumped at the chance of helping.

We arranged to meet in Port Louis, across the other side of the island, from where Heather and I were staying, and in our hire car we shared the potholed roads with other less roadworthy vehicles - demonstrating that ACIM certainly had a big job ahead of it in terms of vehicle safety.

Thankfully, we were distracted from the state of the roads by the flame-red wild poinsettias lining the sides of the road, at least 100 times bigger than the familiar Christmas pot plants we get in Britain, and by wild dogs too sleepy to bark but not too sleepy to wander suicidally in front of the car.

The island's capital is hemmed in by an impressive natural amphitheatre, formed by soaring mountains. We arrived safely in Port Louis, an exciting mix of Indian, African, Chinese and European influences that is good for the culinary culture but not so good for the ACIM. Consumer campaigning is a political business in any country and the surprisingly harmonious mix of races and religions here makes the job of whipping up a popular consumer practically impossible.

We'd arranged to meet Jayen by the old colonial lime barracks and swiftly moved on to an excellent Chinese restaurant. Tucked away in a back street that we would never have known was there, let alone venture into on our own, the food was delicious. In Mauritius, unlike Britain, the origins of Chinese food are very close and it showed in the taste of the meal and in the variety of dishes on offer. There was not a sweet and sour prawn hall in sight and Heather was in her element, scribbling notes as if fried rice was going out of fashion.



When you are on a 'working' honeymoon, there just isn't time to sail hand in hand into the sunset on the hotel's 'love boat'

ACIM HQ was a shock, housed as

it was in a small, three-room office by the barracks with one computer and an obvious lack of funds. Over lunch we had learned that this Consumers' Association had a busy and successful past but a seemingly impossible burden for the future. Consumerism has come so far in the West that it was sad to see the paucity of facilities available here to help advance their cause.

The journalists Jayen had arranged to meet us in Port Louis had not turned up after all but Heather's food research continued as we spent a number of days wandering the streets in nearby towns and scouring the food markets for unusual produce. The mainstream

cooking in Mauritius is influenced largely by Indian flavours and street sellers ply their freshly cooked food to bungy locals. Among the delicacies Heather sniffed out for our delectation were gatouze priments (crisp, spicy balls of deep-fried split peas and green chillies).

Back at our hotel, Heather had already interviewed the chef who, she discovered, often came to Britain to check on gastronomic trends. He was as keen to learn from her as she was from him and, night after night, he produced surprise dishes of local specialities for us - much to the envy of other guests.

Then came another call. "I might

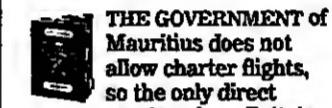
be able to get a newspaper journal-

ist to come to the hotel to ask some

questions," said Jayen. By now we were fast approaching the end of our honeymoon and we invited Jayen over to our hotel for dinner. That last night was spent deep in conversation plotting a consumer revolution in this fascinating country.

I discovered that for the local people, there is a lot of work to be done to achieve what we take for granted as basic protection to the West and, with such a lot for the consumer movement to do, I realised I had spent time in a consumer lawyer's nirvana. Was Heather upset? No. The shark curry and sea urchins the chef had specially prepared for her soon arrived. And, as for the press conference, it never happened.

FACT FILE



THE GOVERNMENT OF

Mauritius does not allow charter flights, so the only direct services from Britain

are on Air Mauritius (0171-434

4375) from Heathrow and

Manchester, and British

Airways (0345 222111) from

Gatwick. BA flies three times

each week (two of these flights

stop to refuel at Nairobi). Air

Mauritius flies non-stop twice a

week from Heathrow, once a

week from Manchester.

You can also sail from

Felixstowe to Mauritius in four

weeks on a cargo vessel for

around £2,500 one-way. Strand

Voyages (0171-836 6363).

Further information: the

Mauritius Government Tourist

Office, 32 Elvaston Place,

London SW7 (0171-581 0294).

When mash is the food of love, eat up

When Husain Husaini met his wife-to-be in India, she was suffering from a craving for mashed potato - and he from an incurable passion



The dusty desert town of Jaisalmer

however, were a bit of a hindrance for what I had in mind.

Somewhat I managed to slip Jess away for a stroll along the lake front. The sun was setting, the stars coming out; an ideal moment to express my growing affection and perhaps even get a smog. But then some of the others discovered us and the moment was gone. This was getting ridiculous. I'd known Jess for almost two weeks in heart-breaking beautiful settings and yet hadn't managed to communicate my desires.

The next day was make or break. Jess was planning to head further south and I couldn't keep traipsing about after her unless I knew what her feelings were. That afternoon, unable to contain myself, I clumsy burst out: "So, are we going to get something together?" For a second I thought I'd blown it as Jess spluttered and laughed, but she seemed to be happy about the prospect and in that moment my life changed for ever. By a quirk of fate, that night was the eve of the Hindu festival of Holi, celebrating the end of winter. And, as we sat canoodling on the roof of our hostel, thousands of fireworks exploded over the lake as if they were just for us.

Getting there: the cheapest flights to India are generally on airlines from the former Soviet Union. You can expect to pay around £300 return to Delhi on an airline such as Armenian Airlines via Yerevan, booked through Classic Travels (0171-499 2222). Indian Airlines (00 91 11 331 0511) has daily flights from Delhi to Udaipur, or there is a train six days a week which takes around 20 hours to complete the same journey.

Jaisalmer can be best reached by bus or train from Jodhpur, about 275km away.

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Such success, opulence and perfection!

So, do architects really live in minimalist houses that are a homage to chrome? Well, some of them do, as Peter Conchie discovered on a new London tour

Shows, it has been said, reveal a lot about a person. Imagine your reaction if 25 strangers rang your doorbell one Saturday morning and spent the next 45 minutes tramping and poking and clumping around your house. Would it be a case of shoes on or shoes off?

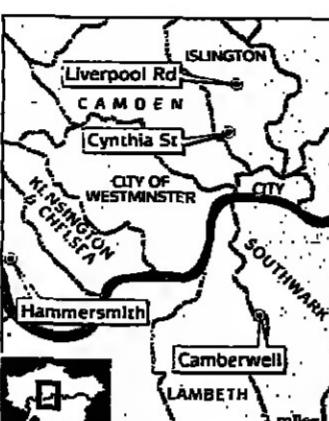
The first of Architectural Dialogue's spring tours asked this very question to some of London's most prominent architects last weekend and, in the coming weeks, artists and loft-owners will be among those facing the same dilemma as Londoners trapse around in a series of coach-driven excursions designed to stimulate discussion and debate about architecture and design.

Camberwell was the first stop of the day and our group of 25 inspected, in the benevolent spirit of *Hella* magazine, the beautiful home of Selina and John Eger. Shoes evidently weren't an issue for this charming couple. They bought the three-storey former laundry and print factory in 1995 and have since adapted it to their needs; the ground floor is a typical architect's space that is both stylish and functional.

The middle and top floors are both domestic spaces, the highest level being a self-contained studio with twin roof terraces. All very swish and Nineties - due in part to expensive detailing such as the Smeg cooker and Vola taps - but the success is in its airiness, created by a curved roof and a triptych of enormous sliding windows that ingeniously retract to reveal that rarest of sights: a pleasant view of Camberwell.

After a short drive through the snarled Saturday-morning streets of south London, the second property, The Deckhouse in Hammersmith, came as a total contrast to the warm and modest design of the Eggers. This, presumably, was the intention. Converted from the former Duckham's oil depot, it is described by its architect, John Young (a director of Richard Rogers), which is based next door, as a flat. In a purely technical sense he's right; there is one bed, a cooking-surface, a single study of sorts. However, Young doesn't do rooms; he does spaces, and this vast "flat" could comfortably accommodate several houses within its voluminous boundaries.

The main living-space has a heated floor made of polished concrete and finished with beeswax. Huge, heavy glass doors suck shut with an impersonal precision, and a yellow steel-and-teak staircase



wraps dramatically around the walls, rising to an orange bed-platform suspended from the ceiling by four slender steel rods. Four floors up, with expansive floor-to-ceiling windows, it offers a spectacular perspective on the river while the stairs continue up to a 360-degree roof observatory.

According to Young, "it leans towards the Japanese belief that only through function and purpose is beauty attainable". A pile of cash helped, too. The bathroom - or, rather, the "bathroom tower" - is accessed through an airlock, constructed from translucent glass bricks with a clear glass-disc ceiling, and is located on the roof in the manner of a modernist outhouse.

It is unquestionably a staggering building; its impact amplified by an absolute lack of clutter and personal possessions. A copy of *The Independent* and a pair of binoculars were the only signs of habitation; everything else was stashed away in uniform, safe-sized stainless steel units. Some of my fellow tourists detected, in the architectural subtext, an overtly masculine monument to someone with - how best to put it? - a well-defined sense of their own self worth. Such excess, such opulence, such perfection. On the plus side, though, there is a great view of Craven Cottage, Fulham's football ground.

Then it was shoes off - did I mention that it was a "shoes off" kind of place? - back on the coach, and on to King's Cross. The Flower House is Peter Romanick's creation, a modern, steel-and-glass-framed dwelling in Cynthia Street, an unpromising stub of a road in the grubby underarm of Angel.

Footwear wasn't an issue in this domestic dwelling. There was a wet J-cloth in the sink and a reassuring

patch of mildew on the shower curtain. "It's nice to know you're human," one woman remarked. Romanick's pad is arranged on a garage model - "Not so much a home, more a light industrial unit" - though a reasonably conventional, open-plan oblong downstairs, up above it comes into its own.

The space is divided into six units, the front three of which make up double bedrooms. The rest of the space is a highly unconventional wall-less arrangement of shower, bath and dresser. No one was brave enough to use the toilet, which sat in a cupboard-sized space behind a sliding door of translucent glass.

The tour didn't consist of passive appreciation, though subtle glances of criticism were exchanged as people wandered about comparing the different houses. Some were less subtle: "Look at the state of the decking," one woman whispered archly in one abode.

The last two houses, off Liverpool Road, Islington, are home to next-door neighbours Peter St John and Marcus Lee, former colleagues at Richard Rogers. In the first of these, St John revealed that "the house is intended to be more relaxed than architect's houses tend to be".

Despite this, it was shoes off as we went upstairs. The wooden floors were treated with a clear, stainless lacquer; curtains were replaced by rolls of felt that hooked above the windows only when required, and a wide strip of Triboard (the material used to make billboards) functioned as a contemporary balaustade. It was something of a chaotic space ("intentionally rather disorientating"), with wonderful high windows.

Stepping next door, to the last house, the tranquil Marcus Lee, a mellow, reflective kind of man, revealed himself as a pragmatist. His warm, timber-framed house is arranged around a central atrium that opens the space and connects floors of the building.

This, too, was a real house, inhabited by real people, which creaked and gave. We wandered around, shoes on, occasionally knocking things over, guilt tinged with relief that here there were in fact things to knock over.

For a copy of the spring programme send an SAE to: Architectural Dialogue, West Hill House, 6 Sudants Lane, London N6 6QU or call 0171-341 1371 for bookings and information. The next Architects' Houses tour is on 29 May, £30 adults or £25 concessions



Lolling on John Young's sophisticated bed-platform, you can peer out at Fulham's football ground

Tom Craig

Journey to the Source

Ever since the 'East meets West' craze hit British stores, bamboo has been "in", fashionable both for its good looks and because it is a genuinely eco-friendly resource. Light-weight, durable (it's bullet-proof), versatile (it's been used to make everything from scaffolding and baskets to lightbulb filaments and Chinese food) and just about the fastest growing plant on the planet (it can grow more than 120cm in 24 hours), its anchor-like qualities even help to prevent deforestation in China.

If you'd prefer to see bamboo in its natural habitat rather than on a Surrey coffee table, though, the place to visit is the Bamboo Sea, one of the largest stretches of bamboo forest

(about 12,000 acres) in southwest China. There are around 30 types of bamboo here, including Nan, Mao, Golden, Fishpole, Turleback and Flower bamboo, so you should find something you like.

The Bamboo Sea is a national park, set over the puddle of moist green vegetation, ink-black pools and gushing waterfalls that covers the valleys and mountains near Yibin, a 60km bus ride (about 75p) away. It is an amazing place to look at - perhaps too amazing. The *Lonely Planet Guide to Southwest China* (£12.99) warns that it has also become one of the country's "most ruthlessly efficient" tourist traps. On top of the national park entrance fee (about £1.10) there are

several other tickets to be paid and in each valley, further fees and a trail of overpriced restaurants to shell out on.

Lonely Planet advises you not to be put off by all this, as it is still an extraordinary place to visit, but to "head along the trail as far as you can go and enjoy the peace and quiet away from the ticket-sellers and the carved bamboo-sellers". Get off the bus at Wanling and seek out the waterfalls at Forgetting Worries Valley and the gloomy

pools of Black Brook Valley. From here, there's a cable car up to the top of the ridge (about £1.50 one-way). Alternatively, head for the 20m-high bamboo at Jadeite Corridor or the Looking at the Sea Pavilion, where the view sweeps down across the canopy of wispy bamboo Sea its name.

If you want to take some bamboo home with you, you will find the stuff all over China - a friend recently picked up a set

of five bamboo paintbrushes in Peking's Saturday flea market for £20 (around £1.50). Alternatively, wait until you're back in Britain and nip along to Emily Readett-Beyley in south London (0171-231 3939). The covetable range of pure bamboo designs here is sleek and modern and has little to do with the mass-produced Victorian furniture or Seventies caneware that British people have come to associate with bamboo. Pieces include the bent bamboo

chair, £255, and two-person seat, £510, shown left - perfect for lolling back on and calculating the number of bamboo paintbrushes you'd have to sell to finance a trip back to China.

If you book today, Bridge KLM from the UK to Peking, works out at around 200 sets of paintbrushes.

Gadget of the week

Conscientious travellers need

look no further than the Micromap®. This is a nifty little gadget that can be worn round your neck. You read the playing card-sized maps (it holds up to six at one time) by moving the

viewer around to magnify the different areas of the map in turn but you'll need both hands to do this so it's best to stop pedalling first, if you're on a bike.

Available in various series (including road maps, UK cities, Ordnance Survey maps, cycle routes, weekend walks, US cities, US national parks, London guides), the viewer costs £14.99 and each series of maps costs £9.99 (ring 0800 783 8740 for stockists or e-mail: info@micromap.co.uk).

RHIANON BATTEN

THE SHOPPING FORECAST



THE SHOPPING FORECAST

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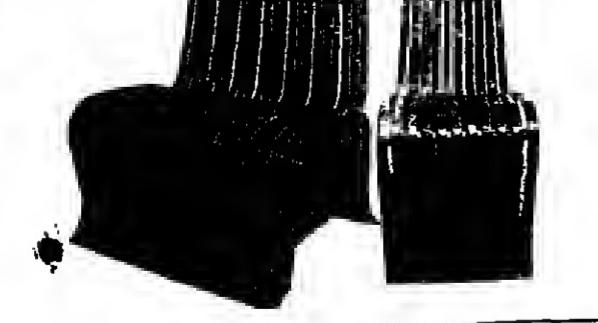
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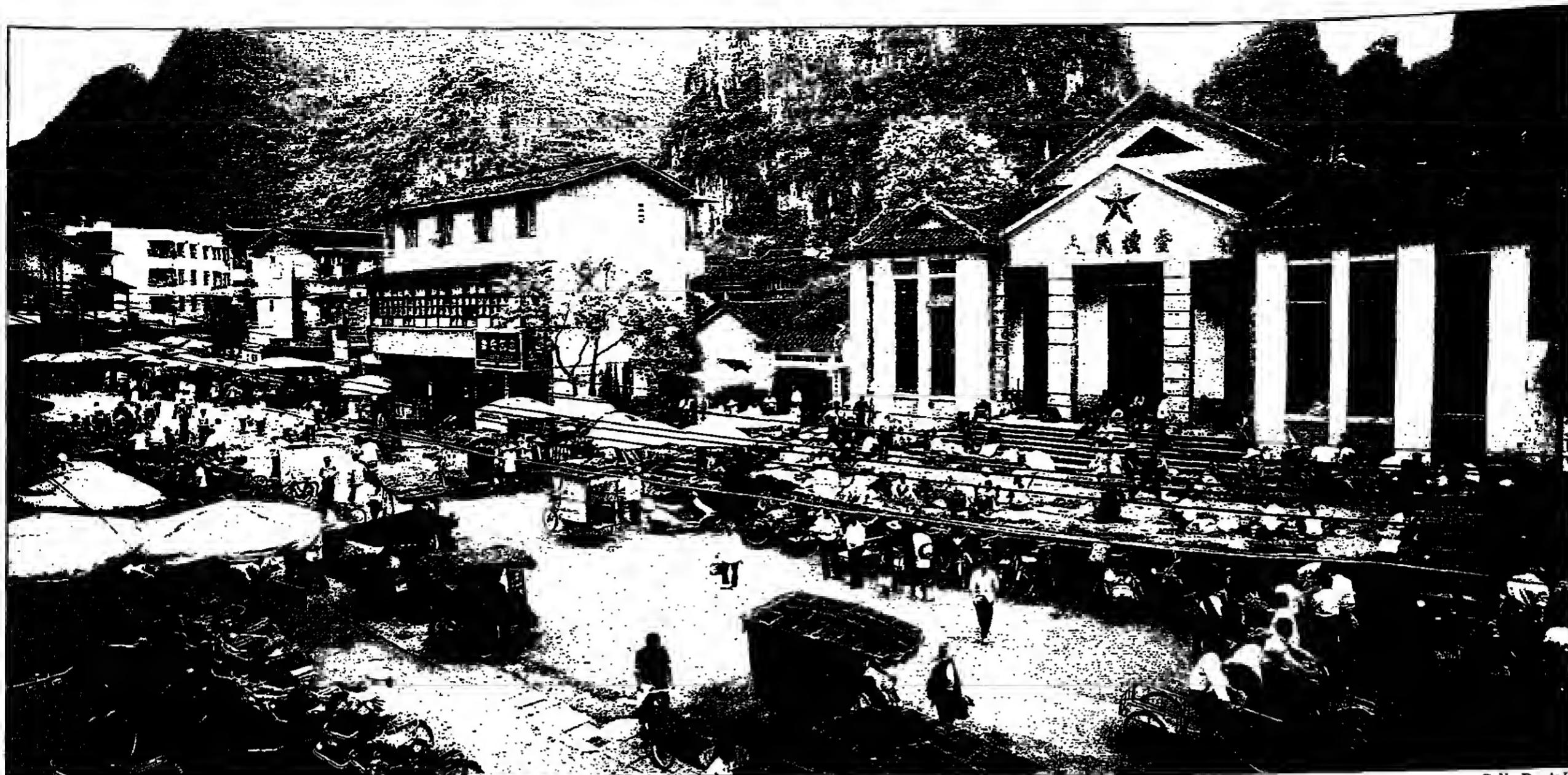
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The mossy limestone peaks that tower over Yangshuo's streets and paddy fields have inspired Chinese poets to describe it as the most beautiful place on earth

Colin Pantall

A different kind of country life

In the first of three stories to celebrate Chinese New Year, Katherine Tanko tours Yangshuo's limestone peaks and paddies

Beyond the souvenir stalls and tourist cafés, everyday Yangshuo lives on. Tractors heading for the fields putter noisily down cobbled streets; men huddle outside shops playing mahjong, while kids wielding badminton rackets leap and squeal at the streets. And visitors are welcome.

But things have changed in Yangshuo. This small country town in Guangxi province, south-east China, has created its own special niche in the country's burgeoning tourist trade. Cashing in on the steady stream of tourists from nearby Guilin – described by generations of Chinese poets as the most beautiful place on earth, and better known than Yangshuo – more people are forgoing the safety of Guilin's star-rated hotels to wallow in Yangshuo's authentic country charms.

The town now boasts enough amenities to serve as the ideal base for exploring Guangxi, and travel agents in town can arrange tours, tickets and excursions to the local attractions such as Dong villages and the famous rice terraces of

Longsheng. But there is also plenty to do right here. There are bicycles for hire, and the aquatically minded can even rent kayaks for a day on the river. If your stay extends beyond a few days, you can sign up for some Mandarin, t'ai chi or Chinese cooking lessons.

For a first-hand glimpse of country life, though, you can join up with Li Yun Zhao, one of a dozen local farmers who offer tailor-made tours into the countryside. These popular tours give visitors a chance to experience village life at close quarters and to sample authentic rural cuisine, since lunch in the guide's own home is included. A bicycle, some basic English and a notebook to record the glowing comments of satisfied customers are all that's needed to launch a lucrative career as a rural tour guide.

Li first began giving tours in 1992. "I needed to make money," she explained, as we set out from Yangshuo on foot. "My house was very old and I wanted to send my three children to school. A few women were already doing tours and I thought, 'hey, I can do that.'"

We cut down a dirt path and

were soon lost in the undulating karst rock landscape for which the Guangxi region is famous. Mossy limestone peaks tower above a patchwork of fish farms, citrus groves and paddies, laced with meandering, jade-green streams. A group of women, knee-deep in paddymud, teased Li as we passed, scolding her for strolling around when there was work to be done. I

was invited to roll up my trousers and get down in the mud to try my hand at transplanting the tender rice seedlings.

Collective farming ended here in 1981, when every family was allotted a portion of land. Li spoke with candour about life for the contemporary Chinese peasant. "Before, if you were lazy or worked hard, you got the same. So no one bothered to

work hard and there were some bad harvests. Now, if people work hard, they can do well for themselves."

We passed through a small village where the sound of voices reciting lessons echoed from a schoolroom. On one grassy verge a lone toddler sat clutching a rice bowl while his mother worked in the fields nearby. "No mother-in-law," Li commented sadly, and asked how women in the

West could manage without the live-in help most Chinese families take for granted. Her relationship with her own mother-in-law had a rocky start, marked by conflicts that had sometimes even led to violence.

"But that's all in the past," she said. "We get along very well now."

It's no wonder. Li is the family money tree, sometimes earning in a week what other farmers earn in a year. Thanks to her success, the family now lives in a two-storey house, complete with satellite dish. In the front room, a huge television sits beneath a shrine invoking the ancestors to bless the family with good luck, and the walls are covered in the school certificates of her three children – a triumph for a woman who managed only three years of school before being released to the family kitchen.

It's no wonder. Li is the family money tree, sometimes earning in a week what other farmers earn in a year. Thanks to her success, the family now lives in a two-storey house, complete with satellite dish. In the front room, a huge television sits beneath a shrine invoking the ancestors to bless the family with good luck, and the walls are covered in the school certificates of her three children – a triumph for a woman who managed only three years of school before being released to the family kitchen.

Everything from toads to rat poison – and all the more conventional products in between – is flogged in an enormous market square the size of an aircraft hangar. The day I visited, there were giant tubs of catfish and eels, sacks stuffed with tobacco and men barbecuing pork trotters with a blow-torch. After an hour wandering around the market, I climbed on the bicycle I had brought by boat and cycled home to Yangshuo along quiet country roads.

FACT FILE

Visas: British passport holders need no visa to enter Hong Kong, but beyond that a Chinese visa, which is most easily obtained through the China Travel Service, 7 Upper St Martin's Lane, London WC2H 9DL (0171-836 3688). Allow a week for processing.

Getting there: Spring or autumn are the best times to visit if you want to avoid the heat of summer, when temperatures

can reach 40 degrees centigrade. There are no direct flights to Guilin from Britain. Specialist tours can be arranged through the China Travel Service (0171-836 9911). There are daily flights between Guilin and Peking (around £350 return) or you can take a hovercraft from Hong Kong to Wuzhou and, from there, get an overnight bus to Yangshuo, for under £50.

The easiest way to get to Yangshuo, though, is by boat. River tours from Guilin cost 360 Yuan (£25) and take around

six hours. You can also get there by local bus for a very reasonable 5 Yuan (50p).

Where to stay: The Yangshuo Paradise Resort (00 86 773 882 2199) offers international-standard rooms starting at US\$100, but you should be able to save up to 50 per cent by booking through an agent. It's also worth checking out the private guest houses, many of which boast "luxury" rooms, with private bath, for a fraction of the price.

After the tour, you can unwind on a boat trip. The five-hour ride through some of the prettiest sections of the Li River, and craggy peaks with names like White Tiger Hill and Pen Holder Peak bug the river's edge. Fishermen on rafts made of tightly lashed bamboo skin across the water like gondoliers, ignored by the water buffalo grazing by the shore.

Follow the river south for an hour and you reach Fuli, a small village of crumbling stone houses. Its main attraction is the twice-weekly market, which draws thousands of people. Here you can see the machinations of China's free-market ethic in full flight.

Everything from toads to rat poison – and all the more conventional products in between – is flogged in an enormous market square the size of an aircraft hangar. The day I visited, there were giant tubs of catfish and eels, sacks stuffed with tobacco and men barbecuing pork trotters with a blow-torch. After an hour wandering around the market, I climbed on the bicycle I had brought by boat and cycled home to Yangshuo along quiet country roads.

The great call of China

The collapse of the south-east Asian economy is bad news for Chinese tourism but means there are some great deals available for Westerners. By Neil Taylor

FOR THREE days towards the end of last year, the Shanghai Exhibition Centre exuded confidence and colour. It had become home to the first serious travel trade market held in China for more than 10 years. The tour operators, who came from all over the world, were faced with a choice of hundreds of local agents and tourist boards, each vying to promote a specific town or province – the choice on offer was bewildering.

No longer do you simply take a Yangtze cruise; 10 companies compete in schedules, standards and price. No longer are you grateful to get a seat on an aircraft; between Shanghai and Peking, for instance, there are now five competing airlines and flights every hour, with three classes on board most aircraft.

Clear marketing differences have emerged between the old tourist favourites such as Peking and Xian on the one hand and the less-known centres on the other. The former hope to keep visitors longer by publicising new attractions with their low admission fees and quiet locations. In Peking, for instance, tourists are encouraged to visit the house and garden of Song Qing-Ling, widow of Sun Yat-sen, and to look down on the Forbidden City from Coal Hill.

In Shanghai, while it is still possible to see the site of the First National Congress of the Communist Party, tourists are now encouraged to visit the stock exchange in Pudong. Towns that Westerners previously ignore, such as Nanjing and Kunming, Guizhou and

are aware of this when they negotiated prices for their new brochures.

The harshness of the Travel Market could not disguise the empty seats on aircraft into China, the over-abundance of hotel rooms throughout the country and the enormous number of taxis always available.

Many Western buyers hope to approach hoteliers during the spring following a bleak winter, both literally and metaphorically. They will then also have ammunition for renegotiating with their original partners. Similar tactics will be used with guides and transport companies.

For the prospective Western visitor, this scenario is ideal. I have just prepared a costing for a client who wanted to repeat a long individual itinerary last made in 1984. The price of £2,300 is identical but the differences are great. Flights will be in modern American aircraft and not in older Russian ones; drives will be along highways and not tracks; train journeys can be measured in hours rather than days and overnight stops will be in four-star hotels and not in poorly lit lodges.

If most of 1990 will be tough for tourism in China, the People's Republic should be able to look forward to a happy 50th birthday in October. Visitors will appreciate the pageantry that is bound to accompany this great occasion, and so will come in large numbers. Some may even be willing to pay what the Chinese regard as normal hotel rates, for the privilege of being there then.

The writer is director of Regent Holidays (0117 921 7111)

... through the Chinese quarter of London's docks

"There were opium dens, where one could buy oblivion, dens of horror where the memory of old sins could be destroyed by the madness of sins that were new."

Not a bad description of Fleet Street, you might think, but in fact Oscar Wilde is illustrating an area of London three miles further east: Limehouse, on the north bank of the Thames.

A century ago, the capital's first Chinatown was established among the vast warehouses, framet docks and decrepit dwellings. Much of it has been obliterated since then, by bombing and redevelopment, but the intrepid traveller in search of the Chinese connection will find much else of interest.

London's docklands began life exactly 200 years ago, when Parliament gave approval for the first modern dock, the West India, carving a great trench from the Isle of Dogs. As such, it attracted workers from the countries with which much of the trade was conducted. To 19th-century entrepreneurs, China appeared to be a source of unlimited cheap labour (it looks much the same to 21st-century investors). Many young Chinese were taken first to the mines of the Transvaal, where they laboured in what one historian described as "sinks of indescribable human beastliness".

In comparison, the Chinese sailors employed by the Blue Funnel Line were relatively lucky. They would spend their shore leave in Limehouse, close to the company's headquarters. The area is named after the lime kilns that processed Kentish chalk: "strange bottle-shaped kilns with their orange, fan-like tongues of fire," remarks Wilde.

To walk the streets where the seamen roamed, begin at the western end of Narrow Street (signposted from Limehouse station). Those possessed of an active imagination will be able to envisage when the thoroughfare lived up to its name, a conspiratorial huddle of warehouses. Nowadays, many have been demolished and replaced by "executive" housing, while those that remain have been so lavishly renovated that they give not a hint of "dens of horror". One notable relic is the Grapes, a 16th-century pub which appears as the Six Jolly Fellowship Porters in Dickens' novel *Our Mutual Friend*.

Limehouse was once a hub of shipbuilding, an honour it shared with Deptford across the river. Sir Walter Raleigh sailed from here in 1585 in search of gold in the New World. Today, a piece of modern sculpture, Jane Ackroyd's *Herring Gull*, enlivens the bleakness of Ropemakers Fields. This is part of the Thames Path National Trail, but the riverside character has been lost. An early 20th-century guidebook reports "little knots of Chinese seamen can always be observed, and the lodging-houses and eating-places bear signs of which few Britons know the meaning". Not these days.

SIMON CALDER

Narrow Street leads on to the Limehouse Causeway, and soon crashing across all this history comes the Docklands Light Railway, a theme park ride masquerading as a piece of public transport. Diving under the DLR at Westferry, you can follow Mandarin Street as far as the bus stop; adjacent, a skewered dragon commemorates the area's Chinese connections.

Cross the six lanes of the West India Dock Road and head along Birchfield Street past Amyot Place. Swing left on to the big, ugly Commercial Road, aka as the A13, venue for a couple of closed-down Chinese restaurants which yesterday were guarded by some older (non-Chinese) gentlemen quaffing an impressive amount of Tennant's Extra.

Soon you encounter Nicholas Hawksmoor's finest East End church, the magnificent St Anne's, and the handsome Limehouse Library, with a statue of Clement Attlee outside.

"For the matter of 18d [7p]

you are at the Chinese Empire in no time," remarked a historian about Limehouse; these days, you must invest £1.20 in a ride on the bus to Soho to meet London's contemporary Chinese community.

TRAILS OF THE UNEXPECTED ...



... through the Chinese quarter of London's docks

"There were opium dens, where one could buy oblivion, dens of horror where the memory of old sins could be destroyed by the madness of sins that were new."

Not a bad description of Fleet Street, you might think, but in fact Oscar Wilde is illustrating an area of London three miles further east: Limehouse, on the north bank of the Thames.

A century ago, the capital's first Chinatown was established among the vast warehouses, framet docks and decrepit dwellings. Much of it has been obliterated since then, by bombing and redevelopment, but the intrepid traveller in search of the Chinese connection will find much else of interest.

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SIMON CALDER



48 hours ... in Amsterdam

You need a break – and a shortcut to the soul of a great city. Ten years ago *The Independent* launched *48 hours*, an idea often imitated but never equalled. Today, York Membrury prescribes the perfect weekend break in Amsterdam

Rijksmuseum

Why go now? Spring is approaching and this charming Dutch city is the perfect place to recharge your batteries over a long weekend. Furthermore, if you were waiting until April to pay a visit to Amsterdam's splendid Van Gogh Museum, you might as well go now, since the reopening of this museum has been postponed until 24 June. And, on 4 March, Cirque du Soleil stages its European première in the city (00 31 20 355 0355 for tickets or use 0900 0106 when in Amsterdam).

Beam down British Airways (0345 222111) has a current special offer fare of £49 return, including tax, from London Gatwick or Heathrow to Amsterdam, but this must be booked before 17 February. The national Dutch carrier, KLM (0900 750900) flies from 21 UK airports, including London, Birmingham and Manchester. Current fares start at £109 return including tax, but the no-frills airline easyJet (0870 600 0000), has flights from Luton or Liverpool to Amsterdam from £70.50 return, also including tax.

Sunday morning: go to church Few people go to Amsterdam to see its churches. But try to see Westerkerk (West Church) in Westermarkt. It doesn't compare to Europe's great cathedrals, but it has two claims to fame: Rembrandt is buried beneath it (though nobody seems to know quite where) and it boasts the highest church tower in Amsterdam. If you're feeling energetic you can climb to the top when the church is open, a climb worth making for the spectacular view. If you're in the vicinity, try to visit the Anne Frank House (in Prinsengracht). Everyone knows the story – at least, they should do – of Anne Frank, the tragic Jewish girl who recorded her years in hiding during the German occupation in her famous diary. More than 50 years on, a visit still makes for a moving experience. Arrive early, though, for most tourists appear to make the pilgrimage.

The icing on the cake Amsterdam might boast fine museums and restaurants, but what makes it special is its unique character – its tree-lined canals, its trams and its cosy coffee-houses. The perfect way to round off a visit is by strolling through the canalside flower market (In Singel – surely the only market in the world in which wooden tulips look as good as the real thing).

An aperitif Why not forget about a traditional aperitif and experience the atmosphere of one of Amsterdam's legendary coffee-shops, where dope is sold legally over the counter and you can enjoy a coffee – or whatever else takes your fancy – in a haze of cannabis smoke? Two such coffee-shops are the Global Village Call-Out Lounge (00 31 20 623 7462), Alternatively, unwind at a trendy bar such as Bar Bep (or Bar Diep), both found in the virtually unpronounceable Nieuwe Zijds Voorburgwal.

Dinner Tourists are usually urged to try one of Amsterdam's many Indonesian restaurants, but being in Holland, I'd opt for Dutch, try De Blauwe Hollander (Leidsegrachtstraat 28 (00 31 20 623 3014)). This dimly lit restaurant's menu revolves around nothing more exciting than meat and two veg, but it's inexpensive and the portions are big. You may have to share a table, but that's part of the fun and it's one of the best restaurants in what is otherwise a very touristy area.

Get your bearings If you fly to Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport, get the train into the city centre. A word of warning: buy the £6.25 (£2) ticket first, otherwise, like me, you'll have to pay £21 (£6.50) to make the 20-minute journey (ouch!). The historic city centre, much of which dates from the 17th century, fans out from Centraal Station around a series of crescent-shaped canals. Since it is so compact, much of the city can be explored on foot – although it is worth investing in a strip card costing £11.50 which can be bought from the public transport office outside Centraal Station. Tread carefully, though: Amsterdam's trams bear down on you from nowhere, there appear to be more cyclists than pedestrians and, of course, everyone drives on the wrong side of the road.

Light lunch I chance upon the delightful Het Karrel (café-restaurant in Warmoesstraat, just a few minutes walk from Damrak). It's in fact in the red-light district, right next to a sex shop. But don't let that put you off, for its mixed plate of meat and cheese, served for two at £18.50, is good value. That, topped off with a Dutch apple tart for dessert, should keep you going until you touch down in Blighty.

Take a ride Cruising Amsterdam's canals in a glass-topped boat provides the perfect introduction to this unique city with its wondrous waterways, countless bridges and the distinctive architecture that dates from Holland's Golden Age in the 17th century. Boats depart from a variety of spots around Centraal Station and Damrak every 15 minutes or so, and the one-hour sightseeing tour costs around £12. Alternatively, if you fancy a more intimate, offbeat canal guide to the city in the summer months, contact Boom Chicago (00 31 20 530 7306).

Check in If you want to splash out, check in to the stately Amstel Hotel (00 31 20 622 6060) which dominates a stretch of the Amstel River. This is where movie stars such as Brad Pitt stay when they are in town. Though with prices for a double room ranging from £875-£925 (£275-£290), you need film-star-deep pockets too. A good medium-priced hotel (costing about £235 (£73) per person per night) is Nova (00 31 20 633 1721). The budget traveller could try Prinsenhof (Prinsengracht 810 (00 31 20 633 1721), where prices start at £125 (£39) a night.

Lunch on the run A popular lunch-time snack is the falafel, essentially a chick-pea kebab. You find falafel stores all over Amsterdam and they cost about the same as an ordinary kebab in Britain. Alternatively, gorge yourself on delicious Dutch-style chips, served with gloopy mayonnaise and costing around £5. Again, they're widely available, though I'd recommend the frites (chips) stall in Westermarkt (about 10 minutes' walk from Dam Square).

Cultural afternoon Visitors are always urged to see the Rijksmuseum (Stadhouderskade 42 (00 31 20 674 7000)). Designed in the 19th century, Holland's national museum (which bears a striking resemblance to Central Station) houses one of the finest sets of Dutch paintings anywhere. Including works by Rembrandt, The Night Watch, Vermeer and Frans Hals. During the refurbishment of the nearby Van Gogh Museum, the building also provides a temporary home to some of that artist's paintings, among them the sunflowers and some self-portraits.

Window-shopping A good place to start is Kalverstraat (a winding pedestrianised street which follows the old course of the Amstel). Once the site of a medieval cattle market, it is now home to chain stores such as C&A and countless other clothes shops. It's probably Amsterdam's nearest equivalent to London's Oxford Street, and on Saturdays it can be just as busy. More upmarket is the stylish Magna Plaza (once one of Europe's grandest post offices, but now converted into a luxurious shopping-centre dominated by upmarket fashion boutiques). The basement is occupied by a Virgin megastore.

GLOBAL AGENDA

Berlin A perfect way to escape the biting February wind in Berlin (pictured) is to retire to a warm cinema and savour some of the choice celluloid offerings of the 49th Berlin International Film Festival. Although a less glitzy affair than Cannes or Venice, there's no doubt the quality and eccentricism of the programme will feature the complete works of Otto Preminger and the homage is devoted to Shirley MacLaine, while Berlin is the only mainstream film festival to have an awards ceremony dedicated solely to gay and lesbian film – the Teddies. Running at various cinemas in Berlin (00 49 3025 4890) to 21 Feb, DM12-DM18 per film.

Washington DC Former members of London's O'Flynn Carte Opera company are staging *The Best of Gilbert and Sullivan*, a lighthearted show featuring melodies from some of the duo's most famous operas, including *The Mikado*, *The Pirates of Penzance* and *HMS Pinafore*. The singers – Deborah Clague, Patricia Leonard, John Aydon, David Mackie and Geoffrey Shovell – will also be airing pieces from some less well-known works,



this millennium, so you can be sure that the costumes, music and performances will be superb.

Círculo de Bellas Artes, 42 Calle Alcalá, Madrid (00 34 91 360 5400) today 11pm-7am, Pts6,500.

such as *Ruddigore*, *The Sorcerer* and *Princess Ida*, as well as interspersing the music with anecdotes about performances in London, and stories about Gilbert and Sullivan and Richard D'Oyly Carte himself. Baird Auditorium, National Museum of Natural History, Tenth & Constitution Avenue NW, Washington DC, USA (00 1 202 357 3030) tomorrow 8pm and 7pm, \$21 per performance.

Madrid You're always spoilt for choice in parts of Spain's capital, but some events have better locations than others and the beautiful Bellas Artes building takes some beating. The subtitle of *Esto se acaba...* (This is coming to an end...) reflects the fact that this year's *baile de máscaras* (masked ball) is the last of

The audience – swelled, no doubt, by locals who attended Beastie Boy Adam Yauch's very successful Tibetan Freedom concert two years ago – will be encouraged to participate. *Gruhn Court*, Asian Art Museum, Kennedy Drive, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, USA (00 1 415 379 8801) today, noon-3pm, \$4-57. SHARON GETHINGS

24-HOUR ROOM SERVICE: ROYAL BATH, BOURNEMOUTH



ONLY ONE resort in Britain, so it is claimed, can boast more than one five-star hotel. Visitors to the town of Bournemouth can choose between the Carlton and the Royal Bath. The frontage of the latter is currently under wraps as it seeks to trump the offerings of the competition. But beyond the high-class scaffolding, how regal does one feel staying at the Royal Bath?

Last weekend was unusual: the hotel was the venue for the annual Xerox finance division knees-up, and I have never seen so many Escort XR3s in one place before. But a contingent of young guns from Slough could not alter the fact that this is a Victorian venue in every sense. On Saturday afternoon, the faded-elegant lounge was replete with the requisite retired colonel. While the weather raged outside the huge south (and sea-) facing windows, inside you could hear a monocle drop.

Unlike some more, er, modern establishments, tradition runs deep. In public rooms such as the bar and the much-praised Oscar's restaurant, for example, there is a dress code – strictly no jeans after 7pm. The irony is that

for all its refined clientele, the Royal Bath is part of the Greene King's Brewery group. The Xerox boys demonstrated that they could, indeed, organise a party in a brewery-owned hotel.

ARE YOU LYING COMFORTABLY? Beds up to seven feet wide, with seven-inch deep mattresses by Mattison's of Ipswich. Non-smoking rooms? None. "We don't have specific non-smoking rooms," says the hotel. "We like to think our housekeeping is so good that we don't need it. We also have a special spray that eliminates tobacco odour."

The best key lets you into the ground floor Edward Suite, which has a private door to the extensive garden. The least favoured are "inland" rooms, overlooking Russell Cotes Road; you pay extra for either a sea-view or a town-view.

Freebies: This Valentine's weekend, red roses and chocolates in every room; normally, fruit and flowers. **Not freebies:** You can buy a Royal Bath towelling robe for £27. **Temperature:** "We're Victorian," says the hotel, explaining that anyone who wants to be warmer or cooler will need to call Housekeeping.

Bathroom: A piping-hot bath takes seven minutes to run, during which time you can

survey the Bournemouth White Iris toilets – including talc and bath salts as well as all the usual smelly stuff.

KEEPING IN TOUCH Television and radio – both emerge through the TV, which has the five terrestrial channels plus a range of Sky stations and MTV. The radio selection is limited to BBC Radio 2, 3 and 4 plus the local 2CR station; none of that noisy Radio 1 pop music or 5 Live sport nonsense.

Fax or internet: Only if you bring your own laptop, and plug it into the ISDN socket if needed. **Phone:** A three-minute call at national peak rates costs £1.20. **Switchboard:** I called on three occasions at different times of

the day, and the average wait was only two seconds. On one call, I had to wait five seconds, and the telephonist apologised for the delay.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION At the Bath Hill Roundabout, Bath Road, Bournemouth, Dorset BH1 2EW (01202 555555). **Transport:** Trains converge on Bournemouth from many parts of the country, but the station is way out of town.

Time to an International airport: 15 minutes by cab to Bournemouth, but the only international destination is Dublin. Heathrow is a two-hour drive away.

Time to Waterloo International: Five minutes by cab to the station, then 100 minutes on South West Trains.

THE BOTTOM LINE Rack rate: A double room, including English breakfast in bed, is £155. The Edward Suite costs exactly twice as much. I'm not paying that: Then sign up for a Leisure Break Sunday Night Special, where two people pay a total of £75 for dinner, bed and breakfast.

Still too much? Check in to the YMCA across the road, and indulge in afternoon tea in the lounge for £9.25. **SIMON CALDER**

MODERN MANNERS: YOUR CUT-OUT-AND-KEEP GUIDE TO SURVIVING THE MINEFIELD

Dear Serena

Dear Serena,
St Valentine's Day is merely another commercial occasion which we, as consumers, have allowed ourselves to be hypnotised into co-operating with. I refuse to be blackmailed into spending unnecessary money by large organisations, but none the less feel myself under pressure to do so. Can you suggest a means whereby I can make my partner understand that I love her without spending money? Steve, Brighton

Two things, Steve: firstly, commercial organisations are very rarely able to sell us things we don't want unless it's via government without our knowledge. Valentine's gifts may be a ghastly commercial tat, but they are merely a commercial response to a very real human need for self-affirmation and/or intrigue. You would, therefore, be well advised to acknowledge these feelings. Secondly, you don't have to spend money, though you might have to sacrifice 10 minutes of your precious time by making a card with scissors.

glue, cardboard, tissue paper and other common household items and leave it somewhere where your partner will find it on the day in question. It is generally a good idea to make romantic or, at least, appreciative gestures within a relationship, as they can disappear altogether without nurture.

Dear Serena,
I love my partner very much, but he has a terrible tendency to meanness which he thinks he has disguised with a set of political stances about renewable resources. The endless recycling of string and the bits of wood clogging up the garden shed I can handle, but how can I persuade him to drop the pose and give me a Valentine's card this year? Stella, Brighton

Tell him that refusing to participate in loaded emotional occasions, however commercialised, can be interpreted as a sign of spiritual meanness and that you would really appreciate receiving a card

as a sign of his affection. And just in case, spend the housekeeping money on a back-up card to send yourself; that way he will at least have paid for half of it.

Dear Serena,
Last year, I met a girl on the Internet who is everything a man could dream of: slim, blonde, small features, large breasts, loves sex (we have had some pretty steamy cyber-sessions, I can tell you), is popular, works in the music industry, lives in a warehouse flat in the centre of town, is a cordon bleu cook, and single. We've had a relationship for some months now, and the



time has come to actually meet. The problem is this: I have been a little untruthful with my descriptions of myself, as I didn't think a woman like her would want to know me if she knew the truth. How do you think she will react when she turns up to meet a Mel Gibson lookalike with his own company and finds a 28-stone bald bloke who lives in a bedsit and works in a sandwich bar? Oh, and I told her my name was Gideon.

Barry, Ealing

I wouldn't worry too much. Do you really think that the woman you describe is spending her nights sitting in by herself playing lonely hearts on a computer? At least you will have your lively imaginations in common.

Dear Serena,
But I would suggest that you both wear unmistakable identifying marks in your buttonholes so you have some chance of recognising each other. The name you might have to change by deed poll.

Dear Serena,
I have been to a couple of dinner parties recently where the women were expected to withdraw at the end of the meal. I don't think this is right in this day and age. Do you?

Lucy, Harrogate

but to indulge in the important bonding ritual of going out into the garden and pissing on the lawn. Insist on staying if you must but be prepared to hoist up your skirts in a flowerbed and squat.

Dear Serena,
My cat is fond of chewing things, and is gradually reducing my wicker furniture to shreds. He pays no attention when I shout at him. What can I do to stop him?

Penny, Newquay

First of all, buy some wooden furniture. Wicker is ugly and collects dust, and cats have a refined sensibility when it comes to their surroundings. While you are saving up, you could try a dash of Tabasco rubbed over the parts he's most fond of chewing.

Knotty problems with the world today?
Write to Dear Serena, 'The Independent', 18th Floor, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, where they will be dealt with the customary sympathy.

ARIES



JUPITER, WITH all its abundant energy, optimism and goodwill, is moving into Aries - no wonder you've got that silly smile on your face. You are such a beacon of good sense and selfless help that clever enemies will soon tag you with a Mother Teresa mania, and accuse you of trying to start a crusade for converts. But you can easily levitate out of these situations, leaving confusion and anger far behind. But don't take any negative feelings with you - they don't go with your shoes.

TAURUS



YOU'VE NEVER been tactful (your diplomatic talents have been confined to not blowing your nose on the ambassador's tie), but here, in the middle of a conjunction between the Moon and Venus, you are suffused with sensitivity. You are at ease in the heights of culture - haute cuisine, couture, bourgeoisie. You are an excellent companion and shed lustre on those you partner. However, you will be more than aware of your new powers and will expect compensation (that's an error).

GEMINI



THERE IS a part of you that would quite like to be debased, and now is the time to dive in. A square aspect with Pluto (your relationship with the underworld and the outerworld) can propel you into the depths and distances of passion. You may not know in what direction you are headed, but there is just no time to care. Trust to fate and eat red meat for breakfast. Even if you end up hitting the very bottom of the gutter, you will rise again, and the scars (bar one) will very quickly fade.

CANCER



YOU AREN'T getting enough exercise (and don't blame your partner). You need to feel your heart racing; routine is stifling your vital signs. What you see in the mirror isn't necessarily the permanent you. If you settle for what you have, you'll wake up suddenly and find that you're old. The essential sweetness you produce must be allowed out. Are you consuming enough garlic? That long-legged person will have to pass the garlic test, and so will you.

The course we plot into the future is obscured by Time's mists, but it is cold, and there are probably icebergs out there. Mystics have warned us that St Valentine's Day may be approaching, so look out lovers, brace yourselves for a hail of automatic weapons fire and the sight of your partners clutching at their wounds as they gargoyle in slow motion to the garage floor.

It is not a good week, if the past is to be any guide. Tutankhamen's sarcophagus was opened, releasing the curse which was responsible for the building of the Millennium Dome. Inquisitorial Christians sentenced the Netherlands to death in 1568, and that equivocator Galileo was born ("It depends what the meaning of the word 'moves' is").

And you wouldn't want to have a birthday this week, because you would be sharing it with Banjo Paterson and Yoko Ono (who is sounding increasingly like a cat). There's also that swot, Alessandro Volta, who named

himself after a unit of electricity to please his teacher, as well as that old gloomy-boots, Thomas Malthus, who ignored the promise of fertiliser to say that we would all die of starvation.

Aquarians are great sexual democrats but are totally hopeless at arithmetic. Famous Belgian Georges Simenon's 10,000 conquests can only be verified by a quantum maths that has not been invented yet. Aquarians are irresistibly attractive to obsessives - their behaviour is familiar to addicts of all sorts - and their supremely original minds inspire them to triple themselves around their bedsheets for the sake of their partners.

But there are also a small number of humanitarians in other fields born this week - three to be precise: John McCarron, Barry Humphries and Matt Groening. But leaving them aside, the rest of it is a lot of actors and celebrity riff raff who needn't concern us here. And that gonk, Prince Andrew.

Things, perforce, will be a bit better next week.

POPPY FOLLY

YOUR STARS: IT COULD HAPPEN



COURAGE is the first virtue, the one that makes all other virtues possible. You are full of the primal stuff - that is why everyone around you is braced for impact. They are desperately trying to remember what they have done to you in the past and hoping you are not going to do it back to them. Please do not go back to worry the corpse of old grudges. You are so much better at dealing with the living than the dead (unlike Capricorn) and your friends really do need the transfusion.

YOU HAVE a busy week ahead: aspects of Mars, Pluto and Saturn operate on you without regard for your popularity ratings. Mars gives you mental capacity, especially with Saturn steady a stray impulse towards recklessness (you decide to put your vest on after all). You feel capable of affecting public opinion. You are not usually that good in public so be careful. But at the week's end you'll say what you see whether or not anyone wants to hear.

A DIFFICULT week. My chest condition was improving. The cortisone at last took effect. I had struggled boyishly through two *Puzzle Panels* and saved the world from my understudy. Let it not be said I have no social conscience. Cortisone makes you balloon out like Oprah Winfrey. It also hinders the critical faculties. To get the best out of a guest, you need to be able to monitor what they say.

Parkinson recently said that the reason his chat show is the best is because he listens. (Hear! Hear!) And here was I with a dod antenna. Consultation with Donald Lane at the Churchill Chest Clinic confirms it. This country's two top experts on my condition agree on strategy: Donald Lane - the country's leading asthmaticologist - and me, the country's leading asthmatic. Keep taking the tablets. Soldier on. But it's a relief to joke with someone who understands my daily and private struggle to breathe. It helps to quell the inner and unbidden lament of "Why me?". Above all it stops me feeling sorry for myself.

On with the molyte, then. I arrive at St Catherine's College, Oxford, as a guest at a celebratory dinner to make Noam Chomsky an honorary fellow. I was looking forward to asking the Grand Old Man how he felt about the track "I am Noam Chomsky" on 70s Gwen Party's *Anti-Blue Nazi* album. I

was reminded of how Auden in his poem "La Musée des Beaux Arts" describes a Brueghel landscape in which peasants go about their earthly - and no doubt clichéd - business, oblivious to Icarus's tragic plunge earthwards. There was no time to feel about any of this. The advice of Dr Baxter, my neuropsychologist, is difficult. The show must go on. I hammer out a script. The next day Harry throws most of it out. What remains is a good script. Inside I still feel hollow. At tea with the guests, I make an extra effort to be affable. I laugh at jokes which seemed better told the first time I heard them. But at heart I feel a gnawing depression and a hollowness unnameable by buns. To my horror, this *Vestibular* starts to work. I enjoy myself. I twinkle. My guests relax. They tip their pearls of wisdom freely on to the dark cloth I have spread before them. Good programme, says Harry afterwards.

It was she that had discovered unimagined talents in me. It was she that had realised I was a puzzlist of a rare order. The announcement left me numb. My father, who had been close to Iris and John most of his life, also seemed to be in shock. It often helps if someone else wobbles. It's as if there are only a limited number of wobbly hats to go round.

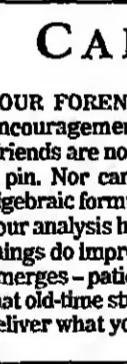
I was recently asked by Ned Sherrin on *Loose Ends* to sit next to a very nervous Jasper Conran. This was wiser than I then realised. My nerves vanished. Jasper had the wobbly hat. At the Chomsky dinner, my father had the wobbly hat. But this was a public occasion. We all shuffled off into dinner.

"Puzzle Panel", BBC Radio 4, Fridays at 1.30pm. Comments to indy@puzzlemaster.co.uk



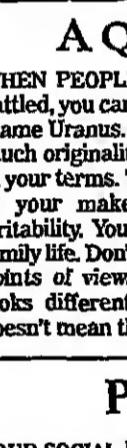
SAGITTARIUS

THOSE WHO have doubted you must eat toxically humble pie. The energy you generate would qualify you for the national grid. Your growth principle is energised, spring has come early, you're ahead of the pack. But as the Great Souls of the East say: "First up, best dressed", and however spiritual your impulses, clothes are always more important. Make sure you evolve in the right direction. Uninspired growth will have to be adjusted by costly surgery.



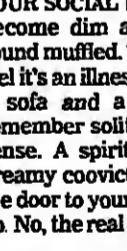
CAPRICORN

YOUR FORENSIC abilities (which need no encouragement) are dangerously aroused. Friends are not specimens to be examined on a pin. Nor can you express your passion in algebraic formulae - so stop thinking so much. Your analysis has far too much "anal" in it. But things do improve. Suddenly your hidden side emerges - patience, self-discipline, honesty, all that old-time stuff. This more than anything will deliver what you have been wanting.



AQUARIUS

WHEN PEOPLE say there's no need to get rattled, you can furiously contradict them and blame Uranus. Its lunar aspect leads to far too much originality; mood swings are wild, even in your terms. There is a weakness for lunacy in your make-up - it's not just normal irritability. You may decide to remodel your family life. Don't lose yourself in other peoples' points of view. Just because the mountain looks different from every different angle doesn't mean the mountain doesn't exist.



PISCES

YOUR SOCIAL life is affected by mist, friends become dim and distant, and their voices sound muffled. This is downtime for you. If you feel it's an illness, try cable therapy (you'll need a sofa and a satellite subscription). But remember solitude can be bad for your dress sense. A spiritual rite may unsettle your dreamy convictions. Don't be persuaded that the door to your secret garden has been nailed up. No, the real problem is finding it in the mist.

CLASSIC CARTOONS

MARTIN PLIMMER ON JEAN-MAURICE BOSC



LARRY (TERENCE Parkes) has sent me two books by his favourite cartoonist, Jean-Maurice Bosc, a Frenchman who found fame in his own country and recognition abroad (*Punch*, *Esquire* etc), but committed suicide in 1965, at the age of 41. Larry first saw Bosc's work in *The Guardian Educational Supplement* in the 1950s, while working as an art teacher. "He influenced me more than anything," he says. "I still find him the greatest." Like many new cartoonists of the time, Larry was struck by Bosc's captionless economy

and innovative simplicity, which at times reduced characters to tiny, childlike squiggles. Bosc used these naive figures to express the chilly ironies which preoccupied him. It's not surprising to learn the Frenchman led a hard life. He fought in the Indo-China war, during which he won the *croix de guerre* and spent 120 days in a Vietcong prison. Nor is it surprising to learn that he served time as a circus clown, another occupation epitomising extremes of comedy and sadness.

PUZZLEMASTER

BY CHRIS MASLANKA

would quiz him on American policy towards Iraq. But a metaphorical bombshell blew me off course.

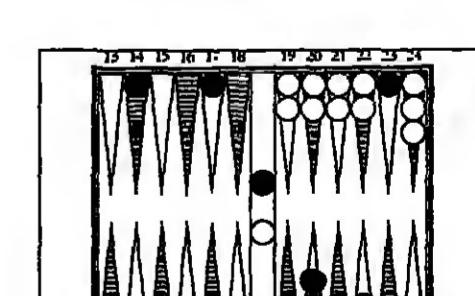
My second father (I always carry a spare) came up ash-faced and told me Iris Murdoch had just died. Iris had been important in my life. At critical moments she had hovered in the background like the fairy godmother I never had. It was she that had discovered unimagined talents in me. It was she that had realised I was a puzzlist of a rare order. The announcement left me numb. My father, who had been close to Iris and John most of his life, also seemed to be in shock. It often helps if someone else wobbles. It's as if there are only a limited number of wobbly hats to go round.

I was recently asked by Ned Sherrin on *Loose Ends* to sit next to a very nervous Jasper Conran. This was wiser than I then realised. My nerves vanished. Jasper had the wobbly hat. At the Chomsky dinner, my father had the wobbly hat. But this was a public occasion. We all shuffled off into dinner.

"Puzzle Panel", BBC Radio 4, Fridays at 1.30pm. Comments to indy@puzzlemaster.co.uk

BACKGAMMON

CHRIS BRAY



ONE OF the great advantages computers have over humans (at least when playing backgammon) is a complete lack of emotion. The best human players can turn off their emotions and concentrate purely on the game. Computers don't remember that in the previous game they lost an outrageous gammon, nor does that loss affect their future play.

Driving back that night under real stars, at about Stokenchurch, where the M40 opens up into what looks like the Thames Valley, I suddenly feel wobbly. I pull over and find a hard shoulder to cry on.

But that's OK now. The show has gone on.

board, then black's position becomes so strong that white must drop the redouble. Most good players would analyse this correctly as a double and a drop. Over the board though that funny old thing called emotion comes in to play. "What if I stay on the bar, then white enters with a 16?" thinks black. "I'll give it one more roll for safety." He does just that, and next roll finds white dropping his redouble. Instead of winning a possible 8 points (if white mistakenly takes) he has won 2. Emotion has clouded the decision-making process. Save the emotions for St Valentine's Day: they have no place at the backgammon board.

SUNDAY TELEVISION & RADIO

BBC1

6.45 Totobubbles (8135795). **7.20** Match of the Day (6651563). **8.30** Breakfast with Frost (522565). **9.30** Heaven and Earth (23191). **10.30** Porridge (41820). **11.00** Match of Their Day: Rodney Marsh (58498). **11.30** Country File (6578). **12.00** On the Record (79191). **1.30** EastEnders (8404207). **2.20** Columbo (6189578). **3.35** Variety Club Showbusiness Awards (2365787). **4.20** 420 Paddington Green (4979207). **4.30** Masterchef (2299) (424). **5.00** News: Weather (264511). **5.20** Regional News (5265578).

5.35 Songs of Praise. Toyah Willcox introduces a special St Valentine's programme (S) (T) (183375).

6.00 Last of the Summer Wine. Compo woos Nora with a motorcycle sdecal (S) (T) (917).

6.30 Antiques Roadshow. From Gainsborough, Lincolnshire. Finds include a possible Renoir (S) (T) (1581928).

7.15 Five Go Mad in the Kitchen. Comic Relief business (T) (609443).

7.20 Holiday Guide to Honeymoons. Cape Town, Tunisia, Kenya, Tanzania and Zanzibar (S) (T) (197608).

8.00 EastEnders. It's Valentine's Day in Albert Square, which sounds like the cue for some gne! (S) (T) (586004).

8.45 CHOICE Love Town. New series about Gretta Green. See Docu-soap of the Day, below (S) (T) (523511).

9.15 News; Weather (T) (32248).

9.30 The Lakes. Bernie discovers she is pregnant by her lover. Father Matthew Danny tells Emma some home truths about her "saintly" mother (237337).

10.00 Men Behaving Badly. Tony delivers a baby (R) (S) (T) (531919).

10.45 Unfinished Business. Spike takes Amy away for a weekend (205998).

11.00 I'm Alan Partridge (R) (620424). **11.40** The Big End (S) (T) (417172). **12.10** International Cricket (4204955).

1.00 BOY Alex (Megan Simpson 1993 NZ). Sporting drama set in 1959 New Zealand about a young female swimmer's attempt to qualify for the 1960 Rome Olympics (Then Weather) (S) (55757). To 2.30am.

BBC2

8.45 French Experience (7987207). **8.30 Little Mouse on the Prairie** (929164). **8.50 Alvin and the Chipmunks** (9295462). **9.40 Wayne Manifesto** (478240). **9.40 The Wild House** (3161424). **10.05 No Sweat** (382075). **10.30 Grange Hill** (49462). **11.00 Charlie Brown and Snoopy Show** (649191). **11.25 Grange Hill** (2260658). **11.50 O Zone** (7604789). **12.05 The Simpsons** (7437630). **12.30 Robot Wars** (658989). **1.00 Around Westminster** (48882). **1.30 Sunday Grandstand** (9046619). **1.35 Rugby Union** (3387288). **1.55 Rugby League** (5421340). **4.30 Snooker** (4973065). **5.30 Rugby League Draw** (5235608).

5.15 Athletics. Live coverage of the BUPA Grand Prix from Birmingham's National Indoor Arena. Commentary from David Coleman, Steve Cram, Paul Dickenson, Brendan Foster, Stuart Storey and Christina Boxer (4483176).

7.30 The Money Programme. Presented by Maya Evans (S) (T) (785).

8.00 Snooker. David Vine introduces live coverage of the concluding frames of the Benson and Hedges Masters final at the Wembley Conference Centre. Commentary from Clive Everton, Ray Edmonds, John Virgo and Dennis Taylor (S) (907337).

9.00 London's Burning. Firefighter soap. Chris juggles the lovesick Yvonne and wayward Lisa - have Recalls' good intentions backfire? (S) (T) (5337).

10.30 A History of Alternative Comedy. With New Labour in power, what future for "alternative" comedy? (S) (T) (40191).

11.00 Gimme Gimme Gimme. Linda appears on an episode of *The Telly Clinger Show* (R) (S) (T) (6712).

11.30 Never Mind the Buzzcocks (S) (30375). **12.00** Still Sunday (1004757). **12.50** The Outer Limits (3711486). **2.00** BBC Learning Zone: Working with Others (22844). **4.00** Languages: Sueños - World Spanish 1-3 (3318). To 5am.

ITV LWT

6.00 GMTV (75795). **8.00 Children's ITW:** Diggit (2924917). **9.25 Art Attack** (449578). **9.50 The Worst Witch** (932574). **10.20 Oggy and the Cockroaches** (303797). **10.30 Sunday Morning** (90375). **11.30 My Favourite Hymns** (1646). **12.00 Crossroads** (27240). **12.30 ITN News:** Weekend Weather (3677357). **12.40 Jonathan Dimbleby** (7011482). **1.30 The Big Match - FA Cup Fifth Round:** Manchester United vs Fulham (34472578). **4.15 Anatomy of Disaster** (S) (676443). **4.50 Big Screen** (3464356). **5.25 London Weekend Tonight** (3655714).

5.45 ITN News; Weather (T) (160917).

6.00 Dream Ticket. Melanie Sykes finds unusual London venues in which to get married (335).

6.30 Bill Bryson's Notes from a Small Island. Bryson visits the Yorkshire Dales (S) (T) (637).

7.00 You've Been Framed! Lisa Riley with viewers' home videos (T) (7482).

7.30 Coronation Street. Roy stuns Hayley at the Valentine's Day disco (S) (T) (849).

8.00 Heartbeat. Misty-eyed police drama set in a 1960s northern village. A new restaurant, run by two brothers, is the target of sabotage and Greengrass develops an interest in archaeology (S) (T) (8801).

9.00 London's Burning. Firefighter soap. Chris juggles the lovesick Yvonne and wayward Lisa - have Recalls' good intentions backfire? (S) (T) (5337).

10.00 Tarrant on TV. With scenes from a Russian game show (35269).

10.30 ITN News; Weather (285375).

10.45 Julie Walters is an Alien... in New York. Julie Walters tries her hand at a number of NY jobs - from hotel chambermaid to rookie NBC reporter (S) (T) (970801).

11.30 Faith and Music (27801). **12.00 Film:** Saraband for Dead Lovers (348660). **1.45** Box Office America (61592). **2.15** Sequester 2032 (1848-399). **3.10** World Football (2998415). **3.40** Jonathan Dimbleby (6259369). **4.25** Cybernet (3476760). To 4.50am.

10.30 CHOICE The Last Seduction (John Dahl 1994 US). Fabulously twisty neo-noir starring Linda Fiorentino. See Film of the Day, below (S) (T) (7773462).

12.05 Boyz Unlimited (R) (6919467). **12.35 4 Later: Babylon 5** (R) (2982979). **1.35 4 Later: Dark Skies** (R) (S) (T) (677912). **2.25 Dweabs** (773269).

2.55 FILM Everybody's Fine (Giuseppe Tomatone 1990 It). Marcello Mastrolonardo stars as a widower travelling Italy to visit his grown-up children (3634689). To 5am.

Channel 4

6.35 Dog City (2954578). **7.00 The Magic Roundabout** (3104578). **7.05 Animal Alphabet** (605646). **7.20 Sally's Lighthouse** (8003085). **7.45 Bug Alert!** (63882). **8.45 Saved by the Bell** (209472). **8.49 City Guys** (9031849). **9.10 Catalog** (686578). **9.45 Planet Pop** (184905). **10.00 The Waltons** (59986). **11.00 Hollyoaks** (252795). **12.40 Dishes** (1875917). **1.20** *Dishes* (982172).

1.35 FILM Can-Can (Walter Lang 1960 US). Frank Sinatra stars in this Cole Porter musical (296191).

3.40 Football Italia (2950459).

6.00 Time Team. Tony Robinson leads an archaeological team to investigate why there is a preserved Roman bathhouse in the middle of a Sussex golf course (T) (68085).

7.00 CHOICE Escape to River Cottage (Cottage. See Documentary of the Day, below (T) (5004).

7.30 Fusion. New series exploring the changing cultural face of 1990s Britain (91).

8.00 Channel 4 Political Awards. Jon Snow and the first-ever televised political awards, including Speaker of the Year, Rising Star of the Year, Parliamentary Questioner of the Year and Peer of the Year (6443).

9.00 In Search of Law and Order. Roger Graef presents a series which looks at how the UK can import ideas from America to deal with youth crime. This week he looks at Texas's non-custodial approach (S) (E207).

10.00 CHOICE The Last Seduction (John Dahl 1994 US). Fabulously twisty neo-noir starring Linda Fiorentino. See Film of the Day, below (S) (T) (9953075).

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10.50 Wing and a Prayer. Anna appears on behalf of an advertising executive charged with the rape of an old lady (85047153).

11.55 The Comedy Network (6067004). **12.25 Sports Talk with Steve Scott** (4950080). **12.55 Ice Hockey - NHL** (S) (5050588). **4.40 Tubs and Fibre** (R) (S) (6593139). **5.05 Move On Up** (R) (S) (4676721). **5.30 Wildlife SOS** (R) (S) (T) (9668196). To 6am.

10.00 CHOICE The Last Seduction (John Dahl 1994 US). Fabulously twisty neo-noir starring Linda Fiorentino. See Film of the Day, below (S) (T) (9953075).

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Channel 5

6.00 Wildlife SOS (885451). **6.30** Havakkozo (8850462). **7.00** Dapplewood Farm (6878207). **7.30 Milkshake**

SATURDAY RADIO

RADIO 1

976-998MHz FM)
7.00 Mart Goodier. **10.00** Chris Moyles. **1.00** Lisa Tanson. **3.00** Radio 1's R'n'B Chart. **5.00** Judge Jules. **7.00** Danny Rampling - Lovegroove Dance Party. **9.00** Westwood - Radio 1 Rap Show. **12.00** Radio 1 Reggae Dancehall Nit. **2.00** Essential Mix: Live in Ireland. **4.00** - **6.30** Annie Nightingale.

RADIO 2

(88-902MHz FM)
6.00 Mo Dutta. **8.05** Brian Matthew. **10.00** Steve Wright's Saturday Show. **1.00** The Smith Lectures. **1.30** The Newly Discovered Casebook of Sherlock Holmes. **2.00** Alan Freeman. **3.30** Johnnie Walker. **5.30** Paul Gambaccini. **7.00** Reading Music. **8.00** M People in Concert. **9.00** Sust Quattro: Rockin' with Suzi Q. **10.00** Bob Harris. **1.00** Lynn Parsons. **4.00** - **7.00** Mo Dutta.

RADIO 3

(90.2-92.4MHz FM)

5.00 On Air

9.00 CD Review:

12.00 Private Passions.

1.00 The Radio 3 Lunchtime Concert. Stephanie Hughes introduces the sixth of 12 recitals by leading pianists. This week, Pascal Rose plays a stylish French programme. Faure: Nocturne in E flat minor; Op 33 No 1. Sabat: Gosselinnes (Set 1). Poulenec: Suite 'Les soirees de Nantes'. Debussy: Pour la piano. (R)

2.00 Best of 3.

3.00 Young Artists' Forum. **4.00** The Secrets of Orchestration. **5.00** Jazz Record Requests. **6.00** Jazz Century.

6.30 Opera on 3. Plácido Domingo sings the title role in Meyerbeer's grand opera set in the Low Countries in 1530. The prophet is an innkeeper who, because he bears an uncanny resemblance to a portrait of the biblical King David, is enlisted by the Anabaptists and crowned emperor in Munster Cathedral. But the tragic personal consequences persuade him to abandon the Anabaptist cause in a spectacular fashion. With a cast including Plácido Domingo, tenor (Jean de Leyden) and Agnes Baltsa, mezzo (Fides, Jean's mother), Vienna State Opera Chorus and Orchestra/Marc-André Viotti.

PICK OF THE DAY

IN BEHIND THE IRON HORSE (2.30pm Rd). Ludovic Kennedy (right) looks at the way the railroads helped to unify the United States, settle the West and wreak havoc on the lives of native Americans.

Between the Ears - Virtual Spires (9.35pm Rd) takes us, to new territory - the virtual community of Alphaworld, "the size of California" but only three

years old. It already has its own newspaper - Richard Coles meets its editor, who has given himself the unpromising avatar of 'Simon Says'.

Coles pops up again later for the much quainter Airs of England (11pm Rd), a four-part series on forgotten English popular music which begins with the sounds of Dickens' London. DOMINIC CAVENDISH

9.35 Between the Ears. 'Virtual Spires'. The first of six newly commissioned experiments in creative radio. Richard Coles trawls the World Wide Web in search of its new empires. Virtual communities the size of California, with no gravity, lawless, and no restrictions on how you look. What sort of society develops when reality and imagination collide? And who rules the new city-states of cyberspace? See *Pick of the Day*.

10.45 Gould Trio. Fuchs: Piano Trio in C. Op 22. Brähms: Piano Trio No 1 in B, Op 8. (R)

11.30 On Through the Night.

RADIO 4 (92.4-94.6MHz FM)

6.00 News Briefing. **6.05** Sports Desk. **6.10** Open Country. **6.57** Weather.

7.20 Today.

9.00 Home Truths. **10.00** NEWS; Loose Ends. **11.00** NEWS; The Food Programme.

11.30 From Our Own Correspondent.

12.00 NEWS; Money Box. **12.30** The Ghost of Number Ten. **12.55** Weather.

1.00 News.

1.15 Any Questions?

2.00 NEWS; Any Answers? 0870 010 0444.

2.30 Behind the Iron Horse. See *Pick of the Day*. **3.00** NEWS; The Saturday Play: And Counting. **4.00** NEWS; Weekend Women's Hour.

5.00 Saturday PM. **5.54** Talking Pictures. **5.57** Weather. **6.00** Six O'Clock News. **6.15** Live from London. **7.00** NEWS; Saturday Review. **7.45** Digging for Victory: Beneath the land on which they are trying to build a lasting peace, Israel and Palestine are locked in war. The battleground is the region's ancient history and the soldiers are archaeologists bulldozing evidence that does not support their political cause. Writer William Dalrymple reports on war amongst the ruins in the Middle East.

8.00 NEWS; The Archive Hour: Watching the Workers. The Mass Observation movement of the 1930s was an ambitious attempt to bring the methods of anthropology to bear on aspects of British society. The results were remarkable and sometimes hilarious - a collision of classes, cultures and regions. Presented by Fred Inglis.

9.00 NEWS; The Classic Serial: Joseph Andrews. Henry Fielding's comic masterpiece is a riotous journey through the morals and manners of high and low society. 1: Joseph's special talents are spotted by Lady Booby, who employs him as her footman, forcing him to leave behind his country sweetheart and find his fortune in London. With Norman Rodway and Matthew Dunster.

Dramatised by Dominic Power. Directed by Michael Fox. **10.00** News and Weather.

RADIO 4 LW (18kHz)

12.00 - **12.04** News; Shipping.

RADIO 5 LIVE (89.5-90.9kHz MW)

6.00 Dirty Talkie.

6.30 Breakfast.

5.00 Chiles on Saturday.

1.00 Move it.

1.30 You're Not Singing Any More.

12.00 Sportscall.

1.00 Sport on 5.

5.05 So-So.

8.00 Dallyn UK.

9.00 The Treatment.



10.00 World Championship Boxing. Commentary from Newcastle of four world title fights, including Joe Calzaghe of Wales defending his WBO super middleweight title against Robin Reid, WBC champion Robbie Woodhall against Vincenzo Nardello of Italy, and a WBO heavyweight clash between Herbie Hide versus Orin Nomis of the US.

1.00 - **6.00** Up All Night.

CLASSIC FM (100.0-101.9MHz FM)

6.00 Sarah Lucas. **6.00** Countdown.

11.00 Masters of Their Art.

12.00 Mike Read. **3.00** Margaret Howard. **6.00** Classic FM at the Movies. **7.00** Smooth Classics at Seven. **8.00** Opera Centre. **10.00** The Classic Quiz. **12.00** Midnight Music. **2.00** - **2.01** Evening Concert. **7.00** Tchaikovsky: Piano Concerto No 3 in E flat. Werner Hees, National Orchestra of Monte Carlo/Eduardo Inaki Bugar. Symphony: Piano Concerto No 3 in D minor, Op 33. Franz Schubert: Quartet. **9.00** Concert Fantasy on Turandot. Vanessa Mae (violin). LPO/Viktoria Federov. Puccini: Nessun Dorma (Turandot). Ben Heppner (tenor). Munich RSO/Roberto Abbado. **4.00** - **6.00** Sunday Start.

VIRGIN RADIO (121.5-125.0MHz FM)

6.00 Richard Allen. **9.00** Harriet Scott. **12.00** Classic Countdown with Russ Williams. **2.00** Rock and Roll Football. **5.30** Wheels of Steel. **10.00** Janet Lee Grace. **2.00** - **6.00** Steve Power.

WORLD SERVICE RADIO (198.4kHz LW)

1.00 Newsdesk. **1.30** Best on Record. **2.00** The World Today.

2.30 Agenda. **3.00** The World Today. **3.30** Sports Roundup. **3.30** World Business Review. **3.45** Letter from America. **4.00** The World Today. **4.30** Omnibus. **5.00** The World Today. **5.30** - **6.00** Women Who Dared to Speak.

TALK RADIO

6.00 OK to Talk. **8.00** Danny Baker's Morning Edition. **12.00** Its Round and White - with Tom Watt.

2.00 The SportZone - Soccer Special. **5.05** 505 with Gary Newbon and Tom Watt. **7.30** Nancy Roberts. **10.00** Dave Bennett's Phone-in with the Midnight Psychic. **2.00** - **8.00** Mike Dickin.

SATELLITE AND CABLE

PICK OF THE DAY

HAVING CAUSED something of a storm when it was released in the cinema for romanticising the IRA, *The Devil's Own* (10pm Sky Premier) receives its satellite premiere tonight. The late Alan J Pakula's muddled film has Brad Pitt miscast as an IRA arms-dealer who lodges with an unwitting New York cop (Harrison Ford, right) during a mission to buy missiles. When the policeman uncovers the plan, he faces an ethical dilemma.

After quite a few years spent drifting along in neutral, Michael Caine has hit top gear with his acclaimed performance as the sleazy agent, Ray Say, in *Little Voice*. Many think it an outrage that this performance has been overlooked in this year's Oscar nominations. The career of one of our most perennially popular and talented screen actors is traced in tonight's *Biography* (7pm History Channel).

JAMES RAMPTON

11.00 A Century of Warfare (963884). **12.00** A Century of Warfare (963446). **1.00** Weapons of War (753753). **2.00** Close.

SKY ONE

7.00 Bump in the Night (66416). **7.30** Street Sharks (3194). **9.00** The Simpleton (1043). **9.30** Garfield and Friends (3557). **10.00** The Best of the Chris Evans Show (74433). **11.00** World War II (40424). **12.00** World War II (40424). **1.00** Sports (6777). **4.30** 2000 Masters World (72022). **5.30** Euro Cup (69328). **6.00** Soccer (62140). **6.30** Tennis (68503). **6.45** Formula 1 (67724). **7.30** Racing News (61952). **8.00** Soap (75787). **8.30** Coronation Street (62022). **9.00** The Big Bang (67242). **9.30** Euro Cup (69328). **10.00** Euro Cup (69328). **11.00** The Big Easy (67242). **12.00** Star Trek Deep Space Nine (63313). **5.00** Star Trek Voyager (64616). **6.00** Xena: Warrior Princess (67242). **7.00** VIP (75787). **8.00** JAG (64545). **9.00** Films: Sky One Special Feature: War Stories (68787). **11.30** Blood in the Water (60067). **12.30** Showbiz Week (63289). **1.00** What's New? (63289). **2.30** America's Dumbest Crime (6651). **3.00** America's Dumbest Crime (6651). **4.00** Gullit (54704). **4.40** Star Trek: Deep Space Nine (63313). **5.00** Star Trek: Voyager (64616). **6.00** Xena: Warrior Princess (67242). **7.00** VIP (75787). **8.00** JAG (64545). **9.00** Films: Sky One Special Feature: War Stories (68787). **11.30** Blood in the Water (60067). **12.30** Showbiz Week (63289). **1.00** What's New? (63289). **2.30** America's Dumbest Crime (6651). **3.00** America's Dumbest Crime (6651). **4.00** Gullit (54704). **4.40** Star Trek: Deep Space Nine (63313). **5.00** Star Trek: Voyager (64616). **6.00** Xena: Warrior Princess (67242). **7.00** VIP (75787). **8.00** JAG (64545). **9.00** Films: Sky One Special Feature: War Stories (68787). **11.30** Blood in the Water (60067). **12.30** Showbiz Week (63289). **1.00** What's New? (63289). **2.30** America's Dumbest Crime (6651). **3.00** America's Dumbest Crime (6651). **4.00** Gullit (54704). **4.40** Star Trek: Deep Space Nine (63313). **5.00** Star Trek: Voyager (64616). **6.00** Xena: Warrior Princess (67242). **7.00** VIP (75787). **8.00** JAG (64545). **9.00** Films: Sky One Special Feature: War Stories (68787). **11.30** Blood in the Water (60067). **12.30** Showbiz Week (63289). **1.00** What's New? (63289). **2.30** America's Dumbest Crime (6651). **3.00** America's Dumbest Crime (6651). **4.00** Gullit (54704). **4.40** Star Trek: Deep Space Nine (63313). **5.00** Star Trek: Voyager (64616). **6.00** Xena: Warrior Princess (67242). **7.00** VIP (75787). **8.00** JAG (64545). **9.00** Films: Sky One Special Feature: War Stories (68787). **11.30** Blood in the Water (60067). **12.30** Showbiz Week (63289). **1.00** What's New? (63289). **2.30** America's Dumbest Crime (6651). **3.00** America's Dumbest Crime (6651). **4.00** Gullit (54704). **4.40** Star Trek: Deep Space Nine (63313). **5.00** Star Trek: Voyager (64616). **6.00** Xena: Warrior Princess (67242). **7.00** VIP (75787). **8.00** JAG (64545). **9.00** Films: Sky One Special Feature: War Stories (68787). **11.30** Blood in the Water (60067). **12.30** Showbiz Week (63289). **1.00** What's New? (63289). **2.30** America's Dumbest Crime (6651). **3.00** America's Dumbest Crime (6651). **4.00** Gullit (54704). **4.40** Star Trek: Deep Space Nine (63313). **5.00** Star Trek: Voyager (64616). **6.00** Xena: Warrior Princess (67242). **7.00** VIP (75787). **8.00** JAG (64545). **9.00** Films: Sky One Special Feature: War Stories (68787). **11.30</**

Directed

SATURDAY TELEVISION

BBC1

BBC2

ITV Carlton

Channel 4

Channel 5

THE WEEKEND REVIEW

The Independent 13 February 1989

JASPER REES

TELEVISION REVIEW



THERE'S A CULTURAL smugness implicit in this way we全力打造 our own pest. Days like *Phase 117W* relies for its comic effect on the collective assumption that we're come a long way since 1970, when the sitcom is set. We no longer have cascades of blow-dried hair, nor like one of the characters, do we think that we eat with. But surely we all understand that, laugh though *BBG's*, which returned this week, isn't about the audience of that last 20-year time, someone who will be failing off that stool at their memories of the 1960s. How strong will we look then?

Another problem confronts a sitcom that laughs at the 1970s. It may be fine to pretend that save they were mightily warning proof that even at age 11, you can still look a bit. And finally to PIG at The Ritz (25), a surreally pointless documentary about a woman who aspiration to take a member of the eponymous species to the Spaghetti hotel. Don't ask why. The last time the Ritz was in the news was because an anglicised version of an American series, is mostly bad. Its title - 'Diner' - is a trigger word rather than a meal, like the words 'air', 'seasoning', 'management' correctly judged as well. On a pig at its head, the programme might not be quite such good PIG, so the pig did go to some hotel - sorry - hotel - in Gloucester. I think the Ritz should sue for wrongful use of *Dinner*. *Dinner* was about pernicious air, seasoning, rather than the main meal, like the production schedule. *Dinner* is a trigger word about the 1970s any more than about the newa. We actually would be that no one actually watched the programme. They played by editors in their

mid-twenties) trying to circum-

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including ours. It suggests a lack of confidence in the material that they had to gun for the most reliable defence if it's

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YOUR MONEY

HOW TO MAKE IT • HOW TO SPEND IT

**Foodie heaven:
the best gadgets
for your kitchen**

SHOPPING, PAGE 11

**The BMW
that thinks
it's an E-type**

MOTORING, PAGE 12

**Dream house
how to buy
the Cosworth**

PROPERTY, PAGE 13

Direct way to your account

Many use direct debits to pay their bills – but they're not always an easy option. By Paul Slade

Fancy having your bank account picked every few months? Millions of people are perfectly happy for it to happen to them. The "pickers" include most of Britain's biggest retailers, councils and utility suppliers. The method they choose is the direct debit.

Direct debits are an increasingly popular way to pay off a huge variety of bills. They involve giving an organisation with which you have a financial relationship the right to withdraw a sum of money from your account. Unlike a standing order, which bows only for the withdrawal of a set amount from your bank account, a direct debit can vary month by month to match a changing bill, subject to proper notice being given of any change in how much is being debited.

For companies such as gas or electricity suppliers, the cheapest and most reliable way to collect money from their customers is via direct debit. Often, they will give discounts to customers who are prepared to use this method, as 31 million people in Britain now do. But the number of complaints to the Banking Ombudsman about direct debits have almost doubled in the past two years, and the oaks are not always keen to honour their promises of a prompt refund when problems arise.

Chris Eadie, the deputy Banking Ombudsman, says that his organisation received 568 complaints regarding direct debits and standing orders last year to September 1998, against 392 in 1995/96. His guess is that about half of these come from direct debit users.

The banks have pledged to give customers a no-nibble refund if they let companies take too much money from their accounts, or take their payments too early. Asked whether they honour this pledge in practice, Eadie says: "They do when we come on the scene and remind them about it. We pack little more punch than the customer on his own."

Complaints about direct debits fall into two categories. The first, involving withdrawals which are too large or taken too early, can be put right with a simple refund.

More serious are the complaints which arise from times when a direct debit which the bank has wrongly stopped. This could lead to, say, an insurance policy being cancelled – with



Pay the easy way – but be prepared for the potential pitfalls

all the potential hazards that implies. In cases like this, the Ombudsman sets any compensation he awards against the bank to reflect the policyholder's true loss and any inconvenience the customer has suffered.

Mr Eadie says: "Banks agree, as one of the conditions of joining the Ombudsman scheme, that they will

DIRECT DEBIT DISCOUNTS		
SUPPLIER	SERVICE	SAVING AS % OF AVERAGE BILL
British Gas	Gas	6%
British Gas	Electricity	4%
BT (bt)	Line rental	4%
Eastern Electricity	Electricity	5%
Eastern Electricity	Gas	7%
Southern Electric	Electricity	2%
Southern Electric	Gas	6%

141 Country Direct Debit. No discounts given on cost of calls.

Discounts on Direct Debit payments compared to quarterly cheque payments from the largest utility suppliers. Shows savings as a percentage of average bill.

Based on monthly Direct Debit unless otherwise stated.

number of direct debits going through the system, there can always be the odd glitch, but problems are few and far between."

As our table shows, electricity suppliers also offer savings for direct debit customers. For some reason, though, water companies seem reluctant to do this. Neither Thames Water nor Severn Trent – identified by Ofwat as the UK's two biggest suppliers – give any discount at all. BT offers a small discount on line rental, but none on the cost of calls.

Some bank customers prefer to rely on standing orders, as they feel this gives them greater control. But standing orders too have their perils.

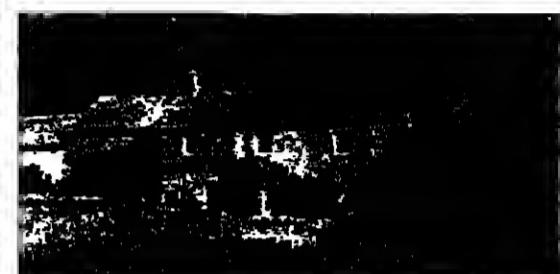
One such problem arises with mortgage repayments. Halifax spokeswoman Alison Kellington says: "Every time the mortgage rate changes, you have to change the standing order with your bank. That's where people sometimes slip up – they forget to change the standing order when the amount of the repayment goes up, and then they're not paying enough."

Whether you use standing orders or direct debits, one danger you face is that the withdrawals force your account into the red without an authorised overdraft. If this happens, your bank will almost certainly charge you for it.

Barclays, for example, charges customers £20 a month if they go more than £20 overdrawn for more than three working days, without gaining the bank's agreement. Arranging a direct debit in the first place, however, is generally free.

Banking Ombudsman: 0171-404 9944

BARGAIN HUNTER



Property of the week

Farm from the madding crowd
IT NEEDS re-roofing, a new damp-proof course, windows, kitchen and bathrooms and central heating. Bloomer Hill Farm, once part of the Skipton Castle Estate on the south-facing slope of the Aire Valley in Yorkshire, has been a hard-working Dales farm with little time for life's luxuries, despite its glorious setting.

Part of it was once a nail maker's workshop – the name Bloomer comes from the iron industry – and you can still see the remains of an old beehive oven. The farmhouse – dating in part from the mid-16th century – has a 24ft pantry with the original bacon-salting slabs and ham hooks and three acres of land. But it will take around £50,000 of work to bring it into the 21st century.

There is also a stone barn with planning consent for conversion into houses and a further five and a half acres of land. The guide price for the farmhouse is £175,000 and £155,000 for the barn. Details from Simon Thornton on 01943 816213.

ROSALIND RUSSELL

Car of the week

The ultimate Cosworth
FORD IS set to launch a high-performance Cosworth-badged version of the Focus, the car of the year. It should be impressive, but it has a hard act to follow in the shape of the hand-built Escort RS Cosworth.

Just 7,143 were delivered between 1992 and 1995. The last batch had a smaller, more responsive turbo that delivered supercar performance of 140mph and 60mph in less than six seconds.

Cosworth specialist Automotive Unlimited (01279 8160490) in Essex has perhaps the finest example in captivity, with an astoundingly low 3,800 miles on the clock. Finished in an attractive light blue and with a comprehensive specification, including leather interior and air conditioning, the asking price of £25,995 is very competitive. Collectors will curse if they miss out.

JAMES RUPPERT

Deal of the week

Switch on to Equitable's ISA
WE ALL like to receive something for nothing. So here's one special offer.

Equitable Life will be launching its new Individual Savings Account (ISA) on 6 April. The account, offered through its unit trust subsidiary, is a fund which tracks the UK All-Share Index. Normally, such accounts levy an annual charge of up to 1 per cent, but Equitable says you can hold your money free for a year. It will then charge 1 per cent. This is cheap, but it's very competitive. Collectors will curse if they miss out.

NIC CICUTTI

Broker funds run for benefit of managers, not clients

The financial regulator has uncovered a record of years of dire performance by various broker funds, writes Andrew Verity

INVESTORS WHO allow independent financial advisers to manage up to 15 per cent of their savings in so-called broker funds are suffering very poor investment performance, City regulators warned this week. Around 100,000 people invest in broker funds, run by independent financial advisers rather than life insurers or investment managers.

In the past, advisers have argued that their detailed knowledge of clients, and the ability to tailor an investment fund to meet their specific needs, offered the potential for outperformance when compared to funds managed by large investment management houses.

However, in its first published survey on the issue, the Personal Investment Authority (PIA) has found damning evidence of bad value for money in the funds. On average, they returned over 50 per cent less than funds run by dedicated managers.

David Peffer, chief executive of the PIA, says: "Existing investors should watch performance carefully and ask themselves if they are getting value for the extra charges."

Mr Peffer's comments follow mounting concerns about this neglected investment area. Financial advisers typically levy their own fee on top of that normally charged by the life insurer, doubling the

level of charges. Total charges usually run to about 2.5 or even 3 per cent a year. This means that, assuming inflation of 2.5 per cent, a fund needs to grow by up to 6 per cent for its value just to stand still.

The PIA's survey reveals that savings invested in broker funds returned an average of 2.5 per cent a year over the last five years – compared to 4.6 per cent for dedicated fund managers. Investors who put their pension money in broker funds also fared poorly. Broker funds returned an average of 4 per cent a year, against 6.2 per cent for dedicated managers.

The PIA has launched a renewed

crackdown on the funds. Advisers whose funds underperform will be required to write to clients explaining why their money should remain invested in this way.

The crackdown is the second recent initiative by the PIA after years of complaints that, in many cases, the funds appeared to be run in the interests of independent financial advisers (IFAs), rather than clients.

In early 1997, the PIA insisted brokers running the funds should be properly qualified and began to insist they have the Investment Management Certificate, a formal qualification. Since then, hundreds of funds have been withdrawn from

the market. The amount of money invested in the funds has shrunk from £200 to £1bn, while the number of funds has dropped from 1,300 to 500. The average amount invested is £2m per fund.

Richard Cockroft, policy adviser at the PIA, says: "There is no excuse for those firms who are managing funds not to have an investment management certificate. The broker fund market is likely to shrink because of two reasons: the qualifications, and the general perception that these are not always advisable – to put it mildly."

The funds also create a conflict of interest for financial advisers

which can potentially compromise their independence. If they persuade clients to join the funds, they gain a stream of income which is not available when they recommend a cheaper fund run directly by an investment house.

While IFAs charge for "running" broker funds, they rarely pick the individual stocks in which the money is invested. Instead, they simply invest in a selection of funds from those on offer at an investment house or life insurer. Companies providing selections of funds include Capel Cure Sharp, the private client investment manager; and Standa Life, the Swedish-owned life office.

Networks of IFAs, such as Countywide, also offer funds.

Regulators are careful to stress that the performance figures are only averages – some companies performed better. But performance in particular areas has been dire.

Brokers offering "adventurous" funds for life insurance savings – designed for high risk and high reward – made an average of just 0.8 per cent a year over the last five years, much less than the "cautious" version. Their professionally-run counterparts returned 6 per cent. Broker funds for offshore life savings did particularly badly, on average shrinking by 0.2 per cent a year.

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Terms and Conditions are available on request. Accounts available to UK residents only. Current 1st year - the rate quoted is the standard rate before deduction of interest rates on eligible non-current accounts. AER stands for Annual Equivalent Rate and illustrates what the interest rate would be if interest was paid and compounded each year. The rate quoted applies to balances of £10,000 and over on 30 Day Notice Accounts for personal savers. A penalty equal to 50 days' gross interest on the amount withdrawn will be charged if you do not give 30 days' notice of withdrawal. Withdrawals are over by electronic transfer to your nominated current account and normally take 3 working days. In exceptional cases we will permit CHAPS withdrawals. There will be a £4.95 fee for this. Rates correct from 8 February 1999. Rates may vary. Standard Life Bank Limited is a company registered in Scotland number SC173485. Registered Office Standard Life House 30 London Road Edinburgh EH3 9PH Telephone calls will be monitored and recorded to help improve customer service.

PERSONAL FINANCE

Critical choices ahead

FINANCIAL MAKEOVER

NAME: MELINDA PHILLIPS AGE: 50 OCCUPATION: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF A NATIONAL CHARITY



Neville Elder

Melinda Phillips wants to plan for the further education of her children, Josh and Rhiannon

THE GENERALLY UNREPORTED PROBLEM OF BROKER FUNDS hit the headlines this week, as we report on our front page. Many tens of thousands of savers have upwards of £1bn in these funds. In many cases the bonds' performances are abysmal.

Yet the advisers and the fund managers administering the individual parcels of money all walk off with large management fees.

Now we hear talk of the Personal Investment Authority (the PIA), the financial regulator, cracking down on these funds.

The problem with such talk is that we've heard it all before. Back in 1997, the PIA released a report showing that broker funds had, on average, underperformed against their indexes in the previous six years.

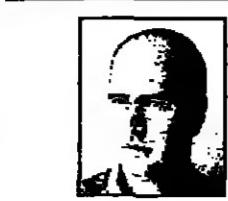
"A general observation can be made that on average the underperformance against the index is approximately equal to additional management fees withdrawn from the funds, but that a number of funds have at least matched their chosen index," the PIA noted dryly, even then.

The PIA report in 1997 found that broker funds provided 25 per cent or more of the annual income for almost 20 per cent of IFAs that offered them.

Two years later, faced with evidence that this underperformance continues and that £1bn still remains – in most cases, wrongly – invested in broker funds, the PIA's self-styled "crackdown" begins to look weak, to say the least.

It might have been easier to rule that unless a broker fund manager can either show out-performance against a relevant index, or obtains a mandate from all clients specifying that their money should remain in one, all funds should be closed down within six months. But that's far too easy.

IF YOU are one of the many tens of thousands who have called Standard Life Bank to inquire about one of its mortgages, you might be interested to know that the company is currently acquiring borrowers at the



NIC CICUTTI

The PIA's crackdown on broker fund fees is beginning to look weak to say the least

rate of knots. The advantage of these "flexible" mortgages is that because most are set at a variable rate, without compulsory insurances and so on, it is simple to work out exactly how much they cost relative to the competition.

Strange then, that with the letters confirming that it is prepared to grant you a mortgage, Standard Life Bank is sending out

comparison tables. These

show it is 0.25 per cent

cheaper than Legal &

General Bank, which offers a

near-identical loan. The

comparison dates back to 6

January, which is the day

before L&G also cut its rate

to match Standard Life.

Obviously there was no attempt by Standard Life to mislead borrowers, and this was pure coincidence. Of course it was.

THE LAST time I was about to incur bank charges (through a oversight on my part), I phoned up my assistant bank manager and successfully pleaded for them to be waived.

Then I succumbed to the notion of convenience and switched to telephone banking instead. This week I received a letter from my new bank telling me that, because I was over my agreed overdraft limit for about three days last month, I would have to pay a one-off charge of £35.

A very nice woman at the other end of the phone was completely inflexible on the matter. Which is fair enough, I suppose. Rules are rules – although it makes me yearn for my old assistant bank manager.

MELINDA IS at a critical stage in her life. She is at an age when retirement planning issues would normally begin to acquire added importance. She also has two young children, Joshua, 11, and Rhiannon, aged 13, who will both need financing through higher education in a few years' time, at the same time.

As chief executive of a national charity, Melinda is a member of a final-salary pension scheme. She also makes extra payments into a company top-up scheme. In addition, she has a previous employers' money-purchase pension pot, plus the remnants of a personal plan into which National Insurance rebates have been held.

In addition to her pension planning needs, and that of funding her children's college education, Melinda is also considering a new mortgage on her property in order to reduce monthly outgoings and help fund her niece's education. Among the other options she is considering in order to do this are the possibility of cashing in part or all of a portfolio of PEPs, built up since 1993/94. In addition to these investments, Melinda also has a variety of building society accounts worth more than £60,000.

Melinda has a £40,000 part-repayment and part endowment-backed mortgage with Cheltenham & Gloucester, at a variable rate of 8.2 per cent. She also contributes towards a separate mortgage on behalf of her mother.

THE ADVICE: Philippa Gee, managing director, Gee & Company, fee-based independent financial advisers based in Shrewsbury (01743 236982).

THE ADVICE: The first concern is your mortgage. At the very least, you should negotiate with your own lender to take advantage of a more competitive rate to reduce monthly outgoings. Given the sizeable funds held in cash, suffering from lower interest rates, I would instead suggest that the mortgage should be repaid immediately.

The endowment policy set up for 50 per cent of the loan should continue and the capital produced at maturity, tax-free, could be used for additional retirement income. The result of this repayment will be around £340 released each month.

There remains the mortgage, on your mother's home. While you could repay the borrowings in full now I would advise against this, as it will significantly deplete your assets.

I have spoken to the lender concerned, who would be willing to change your mother's mortgage to a discounted or capped rate to reduce costs. They would also allow you to then alter the capital repayment portion of the mortgage to take advantage of an "interest-only concession", where payments will consist of only the interest element and the capital borrowed is eventually repaid from the estate. This would reduce your monthly outgoings by up to a further £100.

Turning to your existing investments, we need to retain a cash sum for you as a float to cover one-off expenses and financial "emergencies" and £10,000 should suffice. Excluding the Tessa you re-invested last year, there are more than five dif-

ferent savings accounts and I would suggest that we scale these down to just one; the SAGA account.

This leaves a lump sum of £10,000 to invest now for the children's education, along with the monthly amount of £400 released by the mortgage changes proposed. Assuming a total of £4,000 a year is required per child for four years, increasing by 3 per cent, we estimate a total of £40,000 could be required between 2004 and 2009.

Providing the Tessa and PEPs continue to provide you with competitive returns, these should cover the costs highlighted above.

You are concerned about the effect of current stockmarket volatility on these PEPs and wonder whether to sell now to secure profits achieved to date. While I appreciate your apprehension, the funds are not required for at least five years, and with the tax advantages a PEP can provide, these should be maintained.

It would be right to build up a more balanced portfolio with further investments, and in particular the fixed interest sector. You have already expressed an interest in corporate bonds – you should not be swayed by the media attention given to this type of investment, but a holding of up to £6,000 to make use of your general PEP allowance could be appropriate. This would leave £4,000 to invest elsewhere.

You plan to retire between 60 and 65, and have various pension arrangements in place, as well as the endowment proceeds, which we have suggested you no longer use for the mortgage. The next stage is to request an up-to-date assessment of what you might receive from each pension source at retirement and obtain a state pension forecast from the DSS (simply by completing a short form known as BR19). Based on those details you could then consider increasing the amount invested into

your additional voluntary contributions (AVC) scheme.

I would suggest no more than up to half of the monthly sum saved on your mortgage. For the remaining monthly amount, a standing order should be set up now to boost your cash "float" and discipline you into these regular savings. In April this year, you should start an ISA with a mixture of an initial £3,000 capital sum and then monthly amounts to top it up to the maximum of £7,000 in the first year and £5,000 thereafter.

The value of your property means that there will be an inheritance tax liability on your death. The inclusion of your niece within the arrangements of your estate is not an issue you have considered yet. I would urge you to take account of this.

Finally, although your employer provides significant income protection and other health benefits, you need to protect your earnings ability as much as possible.



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In every market - street or financial - one man's junk is another man's goldmine

Down the junkyard

Are junk bonds a good investment or a load of rubbish, asks Teresa Hunter

Falling interest rates may raise a cheer from Britain's nine million homebuyers, but they can cause real hardship for the country's savers, particularly those trying to live off the income from their nest eggs.

Interest from bank and building society accounts will tumble from the beginning of next month to around 4.5 per cent gross, 3.5 per cent net of tax, following the latest cut in the cost of borrowing. At these levels, even a fairly substantial pot of 100,000 pounds will only produce £300 monthly income.

Returns from Government bonds also slid sharply from 6.3 per cent last year to 4.5 per cent, and are expected to continue to decline further as our interest rates converge with those in Europe, where bank rates are 3 per cent.

Which explains why a new breed of high income funds which are flooding on to the market are proving popular with investors determined to narrow the income gap.

Their advocates believe junk bond funds represent one of the best investment opportunities currently available. Their critics argue that novice savers are being persuaded to risk their shirts on junk which may never be able to meet its obligations.

How safe is investing in bonds? Usually, as safe as it gets. Most bond funds invest in fixed interest stocks, which guarantee an income until maturity. When issued by governments in their own currency, there is virtually no risk of default, because they simply print currency to meet their obligations.

These bonds, called gilts because they are considered a " gilt-edged" investment, are currently yielding about 4.5 per cent. But a word of warning. It is not unknown even for sovereign states to run into difficulties. Russia and Indonesia have recently struggled with foreign debt repayments.

So only bonds issued by governments are safe?

Not entirely. A number of blue chip com-

panies also issue bonds, which are not as safe as gilts, but are the next best thing. They typically yield 1 or 1.5 per cent more than gilts, and took off with the launch of corporate bond personal equity plans in 1992.

The likelihood of these companies defaulting is thought to be very slim, but the risk is assessed by credit rating agencies, like Moody's and Standard & Poor's. The safest corporate bonds get a triple A or double A gold star rating.

So what's the big risk?

These high yielding funds aren't investing in the triple A rated bonds. So-called "junk" corporate bonds promise a return of 7.5 per cent or 8 per cent by buying bonds of companies with much poorer ratings, which means they also have a more pronounced default risk. Anyone who needs to pay 3 per cent above the going rate of interest doesn't look like the best bet in town.

So they're too risky to touch?

Not necessarily, as long as you understand precisely what you are investing in. Although new to the UK scene, the junk bond market has thrived in the US for some time. Very respectable companies issue these bonds. There are currently a flurry from telecom firms like Orange or Colt Telecom, who are too new to have earned higher ratings.

Does anyone agree with her?

Yes. Scottish Widows, Fidelity, Franklin, Perpetual and Schroder have all launched high yielding copycat funds which mix gilts, triple A rated bonds and junk bonds.

What do the critics say? They have three main criticisms. Firstly they maintain that investors do not understand the risk they are taking when they buy these funds, and think they are as completely safe as other bonds.

Second, they warn that higher than

normal charges on a bond fund, also puts the capital at risk. Finally, the junks remain predict a sharp rise in the rate at which these bonds default if the world economy stumbles into a recession.

Murray Johnson's Chris McGinty is convinced that any promise of a yield of above 6.5 per cent in the UK, and above 5.5 per cent in Europe, must put your capital at risk. He says: "The real concern is investors looking for income who buy 'off the page'. They are more likely to buy a high headline rate without understanding the risks."

He is also concerned that a flood of new funds chasing a limited amount of stock will push up prices in the short term, which could well crash later.

BEST PEP The London-based independent financial advice firm, also warns about the risks, but concludes that, on balance, there are attractions for investors desperate for income, provided they understand the pitfalls. Jason Holland, a director at BEST PEP explains: "There is a much greater risk of capital loss than with a conventional corporate bond fund, especially if charges are taken from the capital. If the current economic slowdown moves into a steep recession there is a likelihood of an increase in the default rate on less creditworthy corporate debt."

And even Perpetual's Paul Causer admits that there is a greater risk of default with a junk bond than with the share of a blue chip company.

How often do junk bonds default? Surprisingly little, but when they do it can be spectacular. Mismanagement of junk bonds was at the root of the "savings and loans" scandal in the US, where an entire financial sector was all but wiped out in the early Nineties.

More recently in the UK we have seen Baring Brothers and Queen Moat default, although debts were restricted and some payments made.

So what's the best advice?

As always, if you can afford to take a risk, buy a little bit of everything. If you can't, stick with the traditional gilt and triple A corporate bond funds.

JUNK BONDS OR HIGH INCOME FUNDS?		
FUND NAME	ESTIMATED YIELD	CHARGES
Fidelity Extra Income	7.5% Gross (after charges) paid monthly	3.25% Initial 1.25% Annual (taken from income)
Franklin European Bond	8% Gross (after charges) paid monthly	3.75% Initial 1% Annual (taken from the capital)
M&G High Yield Corp. Bond	8% Gross (after charges) paid monthly	NIL Initial 1.25% Annual (taken from income) Exit charges decreasing over five years from 4.5 down to 1%
Perpetual Monthly Income Plus	8.5% Gross (after charges) paid monthly	3.15% Initial 1.25% (taken from the capital)
Schroder High Yield Bond	7% Gross (after charges) paid quarterly	3.25% Initial 1.25% Annual (taken from the capital)
Scottish Widows Extra Income & Growth PEP	8% Gross (after charges) paid monthly	None

BT enters the fight to make you free

It looks as though Internet service providers will have to drop their fees - or pay the price



UK. Since launching in December, nearly 6,000 users have accessed the MoneyXtra service to obtain comparative mortgage rates and product details and nearly 4,000 have run a search for the best deposit account.

INTERNET INVESTOR
ROBIN AMLÖT

a filter which supplements your Internet browser, and allows you to screen out material of no interest.

Alan Norman, marketing director at Siemens Computer Systems, commented: "WebWasber enables everyone to use the Internet more efficiently, without binding the variety of information available. Users can choose which contents they wish to view and are not compelled to pay transmission fees for unwanted material."

ONE OF the newer personal finance websites, www.siemens.de/servers/wash/wash_us.htm: MoneyXtra, says it has attracted over 20,000 registered users in 8 weeks. Business users are asked for a nominal licence payment, but the program is free to private users. It is

THE LATEST study by Internet analysts Fletcher Research shows that the sale of computer goods turned over £168m in the whole of 1998. The next largest e-commerce markets were airline tickets (£24m); books (£15m) and music (£8m).

WebWasber:
www.siemens.de/servers/wash/wash_us.htm;
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*Source: Standard and Poor's MicroCap. Lump sum investment, offer to bid price, net income re-invested from £11.96 to £11.98, +39.7%. The value of stockmarket investments and any income from them may fall as well as rise and investors may not get back the amount originally invested. The tax treatment of PEPs will change in April 1999. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to the future. For your protection calls may be recorded or monitored. **Source: The Research Department Ltd © 1994-1998. As at 6.1.99. 1441 funds in survey. Issued by Scottish Widows Investment Management Limited. Regulated by the Personal Investment Authority and IMRO.

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LAST WEEK saw me take my first trip to Austria. The object was to learn to ski - also a first. The good news is that I returned in one piece.

The even better news is that I had no trouble in dealing with the Austrian currency. There are 20 Austrian schillings to the pound. I seem to recall that, until 28 years ago, the same measure applied to our own currency. Interestingly one of my travelling companions told me that 20 schillings has been the exchange rate for a considerable length of time. There has to be a moral there somewhere.

Travelling around the ski resorts of southern Austria I was struck by the fact that only one restaurant I came across offered the option for settling the bill in euros.

Since no establishment appeared to accept credit cards, I have not had the chance to discover the effect of being billed in the new European currency for services purchased in the EU. Still, it was an interesting venture into an alternative culture and one which at my age and build is unlikely to be repeated in a hurry.

It was amazing how much had changed during the brief period I was away. The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee lowered interest rates by 50 basis points, while the FTSE index seemed to do nothing but go South. It is only in the last day or so that share prices here in the UK have steadied.

We seem to have a classic conflict here and in the US between the weight of money seeking investment opportunities, and the increasing nervousness of professional managers over the valuation levels accorded to equities.

Take the shake-out in Wall Street at the beginning of the week. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell by a little over 1 per cent, but Nasdaq was nearly 4 per cent down. Much of this was due to a sudden disenchantment with



**BRIAN
TORA**

Interest rates have come down while the FTSE index has just gone South

Internet stocks, virtually all of which are quoted on this exchange. In a way I find this encouraging.

Not so long ago I read of an Internet company bought by one of the established American high-tech houses for nearly a quarter of a billion dollars. This firm, formed by a small group of young Israeli rocket scientists, had no revenues, no profits - simply ideas. But they were worth a lot of money. Perhaps their aspirations will be translated into revenues in due course. But there are some crazy valuations out there.

Meantime, we have seen a gentle reassessment of some value areas in investment, most notably smaller company stocks where the opportunities and dividend yields, now considerably higher than those achievable on gilts, are at last attracting investors.

Many of these smaller businesses are in manufacturing and sell abroad. I rather think it is more the desperation of money seeking a home at a time when gilt yields are rock bottom, multi-national companies are close to all time highs and there seems little to buy.

Ski stocks are out of the question, but I shall now spend some time trawling the market to see what might have been overlooked.

Brian Tora is head of the asset management division of Greig Middleton

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West Bromwich BS	0121 900044	5.25% to 30.4.04	95%	£255	Free ASU for 1 year
FIXED RATES Whole redemption avail					
Norwich Rock	0845 6050500	3.49% to 14.01	95%	£205	Free ASU for 8 months. Adv up to 90%-no MP
Richmondshire	0800 000088	3.65% to 31.3.02	95%	£235	1st 6 mths 3.4% of rate repeat
North & Peterborough BS	01733 532535	4.50% for 4 years	95%	£235	1st 6 years 3.5% of rate repeat
CAPPED RATES					
Bristol & Wm	0800 119555	4.85% to 14.01	95%	£235	To 31.3.04 4.5% of rate repeat
Hove & East Sussex BS	01782 255150	4.95% to 31.1.02	95%	£225	1st 5 years 4.2% of rate repeat
Sunderland BS	0800 132149	5.65% for 4 years	95%	£235	1st 4 yrs 5% of rate repeat
FIRST TIME BUYERS Whole redemption avail					
Northumbria BS	0845 6050500	3.65% to 14.01	95%	£205	To 31.5.04 12.12.98 model repeat
Sheffield BS	0800 133149	4.20% for 3 years	95%	£205	1st 3 years 9.07% of rate repeat
Wales BS	0121 900044	5.05% for 3 years	95%	£205	Interest to end of month
Halton	0800 203049	4.95% to 30.4.04	95%	£205	Revolving & legal fees

To 31.3.04 4.5% of rate repeat

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It's an expensive business

An analysis of funds' add-on costs throws up some interesting anomalies



JONATHAN
DAVIS

My comments last week about the costs charged by unit trusts seems to have struck a chord with several readers. Many of you have expressed surprise that there is no formal requirement on funds to disclose their total expense ratios, as opposed to their annual management fee. Most investors naturally assume that the annual management fee includes all the costs that they are going to be charged.

But it is not so. It is true that the extra costs charged are relatively small. The average extra cost is only 0.21 per cent for all UK funds (average management fee 1.18 per cent, average total expense ratio 1.39 per cent). But the average conceals a wide variety of different experience.

It is striking how widely the add-on costs can differ from group to group. In any event, as the analysts at Fitzrovia International point out, even 0.21 per cent equates to a 15 per cent increase in the cost borne by investor. The cumulative effect over several years can still be striking.

The tables shown here summarise the findings. One lists the fund management groups with the highest and lowest total expense ratios in Fitzrovia's universe of equity funds (the data excludes groups which have fewer than three distinct funds to analyse).

It throws up some anomalies, though as I noted last week, a group with a high total expense ratio (such as Jupiter) may well be able to claim that its higher costs are justified.

Most groups with strong track records will tend to try and charge 1.5 per cent per annum as a management fee, this being about the most that the UK market seems willing to bear.

There is a comparison to be made between different funds. Equity funds are the most expensive, on average, but at least it is possible to lay claim to superior performance, even if only a minority beat the market averages over time.

There is no such excuse for bond and cash funds. As Paul Moulton, chief executive of Fitzrovia International, points out, one type of cash fund should be much the same as the next.

Explaining why some groups offer cash funds with total expense ratios between 0.5 and 0.6 per cent while others charge more than 1.1 per cent, is therefore an interesting question. With bond funds, total expense ratios range from 0.38 per



All that glitters is not gold in the world of investment

Jon Derry/Mirror

cent to groups with ratios above 1.6 per cent.

One moral is that that it pays to shop around. There is no point in giving away with one hand much of the benefits gained from taking your money out of the building society in the first place.

Then there are index funds. This hobby horse has already been flogged to death in this column. But you may not have seen that the regular monitoring of tracker versus active funds carried out by HSBC.

It recently showed that the brief triumph of the third quarter last year when active managers outperformed tracker funds for the first time for some while, was overturned in the last quarter of the year. Only one-third of actively-managed funds beat the index in 1998 and in the past 10 years only one in five has managed the feat.

Fitzrovia's analysis confirms that index funds are also the cheapest way to invest in the equity market. The figures are given in my second table.

UK tracker funds have total expense ratios a third to a half cheaper than those of actively managed funds. Index funds remain the benchmark against which other types of managed fund must be measured. Boring - but true.

HIGHEST AND LOWEST COST FUND MANAGERS

Highest cost equity fund TERs by manager	Lowest cost equity fund TERs by manager
Rothschild Asset Management	2.30%
Jupiter International Group	2.08%
AIB Govett Asset Management	1.95%
Old Mutual International	1.93%
Ely Place Investments	1.91%
Metropolitan Unit Trust Managers	1.90%
Johnson Fry Asset Management	1.84%
City Financial Centre	1.83%
Marlborough Fund Managers	1.79%
Equitable Unit Trust Managers	0.50%
Royal London Unit Trust Managers	0.67%
Flemings	0.85%
Scottish Equitable Group	1.06%
M&G	1.06%
Scottish Life Assurance Company	1.08%
CIS (Co-operative Insurance Society)	1.08%
Scottish Mutual	1.10%
Schroders	1.12%

Source: Fitzrovia International

UK FUNDS COMPARED

	UK	US	Europe	World	Japan	Far East
Equity fund	1.39	1.47	1.52	1.51	1.60	1.73
Index fund	0.92	0.80	0.88	1.01	0.79	1.00
Difference	0.47	0.67	0.64	0.50	0.81	0.73

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How the monster eats your savings

Let's hope that the Government's proposals for pensions remove some of the charging scandals. By John Chapman

If there is one unifying theme in all the Treasury's proposals on pensions - from stakeholder schemes to the new unit and investment trusts-backed vehicle discussed last week - it is an emphasis on the need for low-charging funds.

The Treasury's insistence on low-cost products has informed its plans on "CATmarking", or setting benchmarks for investments. It is also reflected in an unrelenting hostility to the way life insurance companies are perceived to be levying heavy fees on the pensions they sell to the public.

There is no question that many companies impose heavy charges. These can take several forms.

Most plans have so-called "bid/offer spreads" of 5 per cent. This means that if you place £100 in a pension today, it will only be worth £95 tomorrow. Then there are fund charges of around 1 per cent a year, falling to 0.5 per cent after some 10 years.

Unit trust PEPs have similar charges, of course. However, pension companies then slip in plan fees of around £3 per month, which rise with inflation. Even then, with most companies, such charges fall well short of covering their costs, which are dominated by the heavy commissions they pay those people and firms who sell their products. Big-hitting charges now come into play.

The most common way this is done involves sharp reductions in the allocation of early premiums into investment units. In other words, in the first year or two that you pay premiums into a pension, a large slice of your money disappears in charges.

The lowest allocations include 35 per cent of premiums paid for 30 months with Allied Dunbar; 30 per cent for 27 months with Eagle Star; and 35 per cent for 24 months with Sun Life of Canada. This means that if you pay premiums of £200 a month for 2 years, a total of £4,800, you can say goodbye to £3,120 or £3,360 if the fund grows by 9 per cent a year.

The most misleading way in which policy holders are charged is through "capital units".

First, if you stop paying premiums, you will lose a substantial chunk of them. For example, if you stop paying £200 monthly premiums at the end of year two with plans from Canada Life or J Rothschild, you would lose around £2,500 or £3,000.

Second, even if you keep paying premiums into the pension, your capital units are subject to levies as high as 6 per cent a year - for the duration of the pension. This means that if investment growth is 9 per cent a year your capital units would grow at only 3 per cent a year. There will always be a chunk of your pension affected in this way, no matter how long you continue paying premiums.

Of course, companies argue that over the years, the effect of capital units is gradually diluted. However, the reverse applies if a policyholder halts contributions into the pension, as

However, with other charges, the RIY may not be constant. Thus, a plan fee of £3 a month, rising in line with inflation, would reduce 9 per cent annual growth to 7.4 per cent after 2 years, and to 8.7 per cent after 10 years. The plan fee has an RIY of 1.6 per cent at 2 years and only 0.8 per cent after 10 years.

If only 50 per cent of premiums for years 1 and 2 are allocated to a plan, the effective investment growth of all the premiums would be minus 4.7 per cent a year by year ten.

This would change to minus 1.2 per cent a year by year five, and to plus 6.2 per cent a year by year 10. The RIYs of such a reduction in early allocations would then be 56.5 per cent at year 2, 10.2 per cent at year 5 and 2.8 per cent at year 10.

Confused? You should be.

The RIY make-ups of big-hitting mixes of charges are illustrated in the first part of our table. The effects of charges like bid/offer spreads, annual fund charges and plan fees, are dwarfed by the big-hitting charges. Some 27 well-known companies are listed as using such heavy charges, but many others do. Taking account of losses, towards half or more of the plan-holders of these companies stand to make losses or very poor returns.

But not all pension companies have such big-hitting charges, as shown in the second part of the table. Some companies, six of which sell through independent financial advisers, such as Standard Life and Scottish Widows, recoup costs through small but constant cuts in allocations of money invested by policyholders.

There is also a growing band of very low charge companies, as Equitable Life is joined by direct sellers like Virgin, Direct Line and several others. Ignorance of the situation is the basic reason why people still buy plans with hard-hitting charges. But that ignorance has been backed by the inaction of governments and regulators. Up to now, they have appeared stupefied by an industrial monster which consumes rather than multiplies the savings of up to half the people it is meant to serve.

It is to be hoped that the Government's new initiatives will help to bring this all to an end.

The most misleading way in which policy holders are charged is through 'capital units'

more of the overall fund will always be hit at the higher level.

A charitable interpretation of these charges is that only a few people stop paying premiums, or that companies do not expect lapses to happen. The truth is different. Recent figures from the Personal Investment Authority, the financial watchdog, indicate that, depending on the sales outlet, some 30 to 40 per cent of planholders stop paying premiums by the end of the fourth year. With many companies, over half the planholders stop by the end of the fifth year. Companies not only know about lapses - they plan their charges to take account of them.

The effects of individual charges can be compared through "reductions in yield", or RIY. But this can be confusing to many. For example, assuming investment growth at 9 per cent a year, a 1 per cent annual charge would reduce growth to 8 per cent, an RIY of 1 per cent.

It is to be hoped that the Government's new initiatives will help to bring this all to an end.



Many private pension holders are being ripped off Phil Dye/SDR

HOW PENSION FIRMS SHORT-CHANGE US

with reduction in yield make-ups, %

Early reductions in allocations

	yr1	yr5	yr10	yr15	yr25	Companies using type of sub
5% bid/offer spread	5.1	2.1	1.0	0.6	0.3	Abbey National, Allied Dunbar, Cheltenham & Gloucester, Eagle Star, Legal & General, Lloyd TSB, Mutual of America, Norwich Union, P&G, Royal London, Scottish Life and Sun Life of Canada.
Fund charge 1% pa, & 0.5% pa after 10 years	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.8	0.6	
50% reduction in all allocations for 2 years then 10% allocation of premiums	56.5	8.8	2.0	0.8	0.6	
Plan fee (£3m pmt)	1.6	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.1	
Overall RIYs	64.2	12.5	4.3	2.5	1.7	

Capital units for first year premiums

	yr1	yr5	yr10	yr15	yr25	Barclays, Britannia, Cheltenham & Gloucester, First Direct, Halifax, Lloyds TSB, London & Manchester Pensions and National Mutual.
5% bid/offer spread	5.1	2.1	1.0	0.6	0.3	
Fund charge 1% pa	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	
5% reduction in all allocations	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	
2 year units, 3.5% levy	69.9	12.6	3.6	1.7	0.7	
Plan fee (£3m pmt)	1.6	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.1	
Overall RIYs	76.9	15.6	5.2	2.9	1.5	

Capital units for first two years premiums

	yr1	yr5	yr10	yr15	yr25	Canada Life, J Rothschild, and London & Manchester Associates.
5% bid/offer spread	5.1	2.1	1.0	0.6	0.3	
Fund charge 1% pa	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	
5% reduction in all allocations	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	
2 year units, 3.5% levy	69.9	12.6	3.6	1.7	0.7	
Plan fee (£3m pmt)	1.6	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.1	
Overall RIYs	76.4	15.6	5.2	2.9	1.5	

Penalties on transfer

	yr1	yr5	yr10	yr15	yr25	Abbey Life, Guardian and Standard Life.
5% bid/offer spread	5.1	2.1	1.0	0.6	0.3	
Fund charge 1.2% pa	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	
5% reduction in all allocations	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	
2 year units, 3.5% levy	21.1	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.3	
Plan fee (£3m pmt)	59.0	11.5	4.6	2.0	0.9	
Overall RIYs	12.9	5.8	3.3	2.6	1.5	

Constant reductions in allocations

	yr1	yr5	yr10	yr15	yr25	GGU, Halifax, Royal Sun Alliance, Scott Amicable, Scottish Widows and Standard Life.
5% bid/offer spread	5.1	2.1	1.0	0.6	0.3	
Fund charge 1.2% pa	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	
5% reduction in all allocations	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	
2 year units, 3.5% levy	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.8	0.6	
Plan fee (£3m pmt)	1.6	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.1	
Overall RIYs	12.9	5.8	3.3	2.6	1.5	

Mixes in some very low charge plans

	yr1	yr5	yr10	yr15	yr25	Abbey Life, Guardian and Standard Life.
5% bid/offer spread	5.1	2.1	1.0	0.6	0.3	
Fund charge 1.2% pa	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	
5% reduction in all allocations	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	
2 year units, 3.5% levy	21.1	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.3	
Plan fee (£3m pmt)	59.0	11.5	4.6	2.0	0.9	
Overall RIYs	4.1	1.9	1.2	0.9	0.7	

Direct Line

	yr1	yr5	yr10	yr15	yr25	
Fund charge 1% pa	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	
2% reduction in all allocations	2.1	0.9	0.5	0.3	0.2	
Overall RIYs	3.1	1.9	1.5	1.3	1.2	

Equitable Life

	yr1	yr

A casual attitude to skiing insurance can prove very costly. By Teresa Hunter

Don't be a fall guy

ONLY A madman would sit behind the wheel of a car without adequate insurance. Yet, as tens of thousands of UK families prepare to strap on skis during the coming half-term holiday, many of them will do so without a thought for the consequences of an accident.

If so, they should take note of the fact that a huge surge in law suits means courts are now懂得 that some should pay for any reckless frolicking in the snow.

British lawyers are very concerned at the way UK skiers head for the winter sun with hardly any basic understanding of rules that Europeans regard as a legally enforceable highway code of the snow. This leaves them vulnerable to criminal prosecution as well as claims for compensation. Furthermore, UK insurers are now encouraging policyholders to sue for loss of earnings, pain and suffering.

Winter sport litigation expert, Bronwen Courtney-Stamp, of the solicitors Stones, Cann and Hallatt, explains: "We all know the Americans are very litigious, but people underestimate the extent to which

Europeans have always been quick to sue for skiing accidents. Over the last couple of years we have seen an explosion in claims."

The need for a well designed ski insurance policy is clear, and travellers who simply opt for the policy at the back of a holiday brochure, or worse still opt out altogether, could be making the most expensive mistake of their lives.

David Sterling, of specialist ski insurer Crispin Spiers argues: "Whatever happens, if you have insurance, you have someone on your side. Insurers will support you in very difficult circumstances. But buying the right policy is essential."

A good policy should provide £2m third-party liability cover. However most ski policies will not cover accidents on a mechanical vehicle, such as a snowmobile, so you need to consult a specialist broker for that.

Research also reveals that one in 10 people who go skiing this winter will need medical assistance following an injury, but the same accident can cost widely differing amounts depending on the resort.

Brokers recommend a minimum of £1 million medical cover, but this should not be viewed as some kind



A simple accident can wipe the smiles off the slopes if you are not properly insured. *Allsport*

of private medical insurance. It is catastrophe cover, designed to provide emergency treatment and to get you home. Any prior medical condition is strictly excluded.

A spokesman for the Insurance Ombudsman warns: "Policyholders should get approval for all medical treatment before it takes place to prevent disputes when they return to this country."

"A doctor in Switzerland might say that a particular form of treatment might possibly be necessary. If the insurer could later dispute this."

The Ombudsman relies on doctors on the spot when it comes to arbitrating disputes, but to avoid wrangles keep the insurer informed and get copies of all medical reports.

Another contentious area is the loss of skis or equipment. Although most policies cover skiing equipment, they nearly all spell out the skier's "duty of care". So, if you leave your skis outside a restaurant or bar (extremely common) and they are stolen, the policy will not pay out.

One exception is the contract from ski specialists DCT. A spokesman explains: "The reality is you can't expect skiers to walk into a restaurant wearing their skis. If you claim to be a specialist ski insurer, you have to cover the skis."

David Sterling has his own tip. "Split your skis up when you go in. Put one round one side of the restaurant and one around the other."

Always make sure that your policy covers passes, ski packs and lessons which you might be unable to use following an injury, but beware, as some policies set low daily limits, which would not cover all your loss.

Similarly opt for a contract which compensates for piste closure following poor weather conditions.

Many skiers are opting for annual travel policies, which allow them a summer break and typically provide two weeks of winter sports cover. Options offers an annual Europe plan for £28, with a family policy from TravelPlan Direct starting at £66.50.

Frequent skier policies provide up to four weeks' annual ski cover, starting at around £50, but are more costly for those flying to the US.

THE BEST LAST-MINUTE SKI INSURANCE DEALS

	Family Care	18.70	3,000	300	150	35	no	yes
Options	0990 567224	20.00	3,000	150 per item		35	yes	no
Options	01252 747747	20.30	5,000	600	150	35	yes	yes
Direct Travel	01903 812345	20.50	3,000	350	100	30	no	no
Travel Plan Direct	0800 018 8747							
Options	50.60	3,000	150 per item			35	yes	no
Worldwide Travel	50.90	1,000	350	200	40	yes	no	
Columbus Direct	53.00	3,000	500	300	35	yes	no	
Direct Travel	54.50	5,000	600	150	35	yes	yes	
FREQUENT ANNUAL including us single (family premium in brackets)								
Direct Travel	75.00 (105)	3,000	400	150	35	yes	yes	
Travel Plan Direct	91.50 (143.5)	3,000	350	100	30	no	no	
BIBA	96.97 (160.09)	5,000	500	200	30	no	yes	
Boots	99.00 (148.50)	5,000	500	50	no	no	no	

Source: Consumers Association

DON'T GET PISTE OFF

AS THE glistening sea of virgin snow beckons, not many people stop to think that most policies exclude off-piste skiing. That detail is often buried in the small print.

Even one reputable high-street retailer has produced a leaflet for its winter sports insurance policy showing skiers skiing off-piste – although off-piste skiing is excluded by the policy, unless the policyholder is accompanied by a qualified instructor or a guide.

And the page which lists activities that are not covered depicts skiers off-piste.

A spokesman for the company says that there was no intention to deliberately mislead, and that the wording of the brochure was perfectly clear.

The pictures were merely chosen to reflect winter sports activities, the spokesman added.

Millions facing hard times at retirement

Pension planning is vital for so many. By Nic Cicutti

DESPITE THE constant talk about the need for retirement planning and Government initiatives on the pensions front, more people than ever before face financial hardship when they half work.

These are the findings of a survey by Fleming Asset Management, the investment trust and pension provider. They show that, since 1996, when the company carried out its last survey on the same issue, the number of people who would be badly off at retirement has grown from 10 million to 13 million.

The perception by individuals that they will be worse off in retirement also appears to be growing, whereas 62 per cent of people surveyed in 1996 felt they would be better off, this dropped to 51 per cent three years later.

Ian Overage, marketing manager at Flemings, says: "Even with the Government's proposals for lower earners announced in the recent Green Paper, the vast majority of people will still not benefit. People who are earning a decent salary simply cannot rely on the state."

Flemings' research also shows that the number of people aged 50 to 59 who will be entering into retirement in financial hardship has dou-

bled to 1.2 million since 1996. This is caused by sharply falling annuity rates, which will reduce substantially the payout to be expected from maturing personal pensions or so-called money purchase schemes. Actuaries are adjusting their annuity rates downwards to compensate for the fact that people now live longer, on average.

In particular, self-employed people are likely to be hit hard. In 1996, some 54 per cent were not putting enough into their pension, a figure which grew to 64 per cent in 1999. This compares with 44 per cent of employees who are not making enough provision for their future.

Women taking career breaks are affected too: a failure to invest in a pension while bringing up children can have a disproportionate effect on retirement income. This is because money invested at an early point in a career has the opportunity to grow for the longest period of time before retirement – or not, if a person stops work to raise a family.

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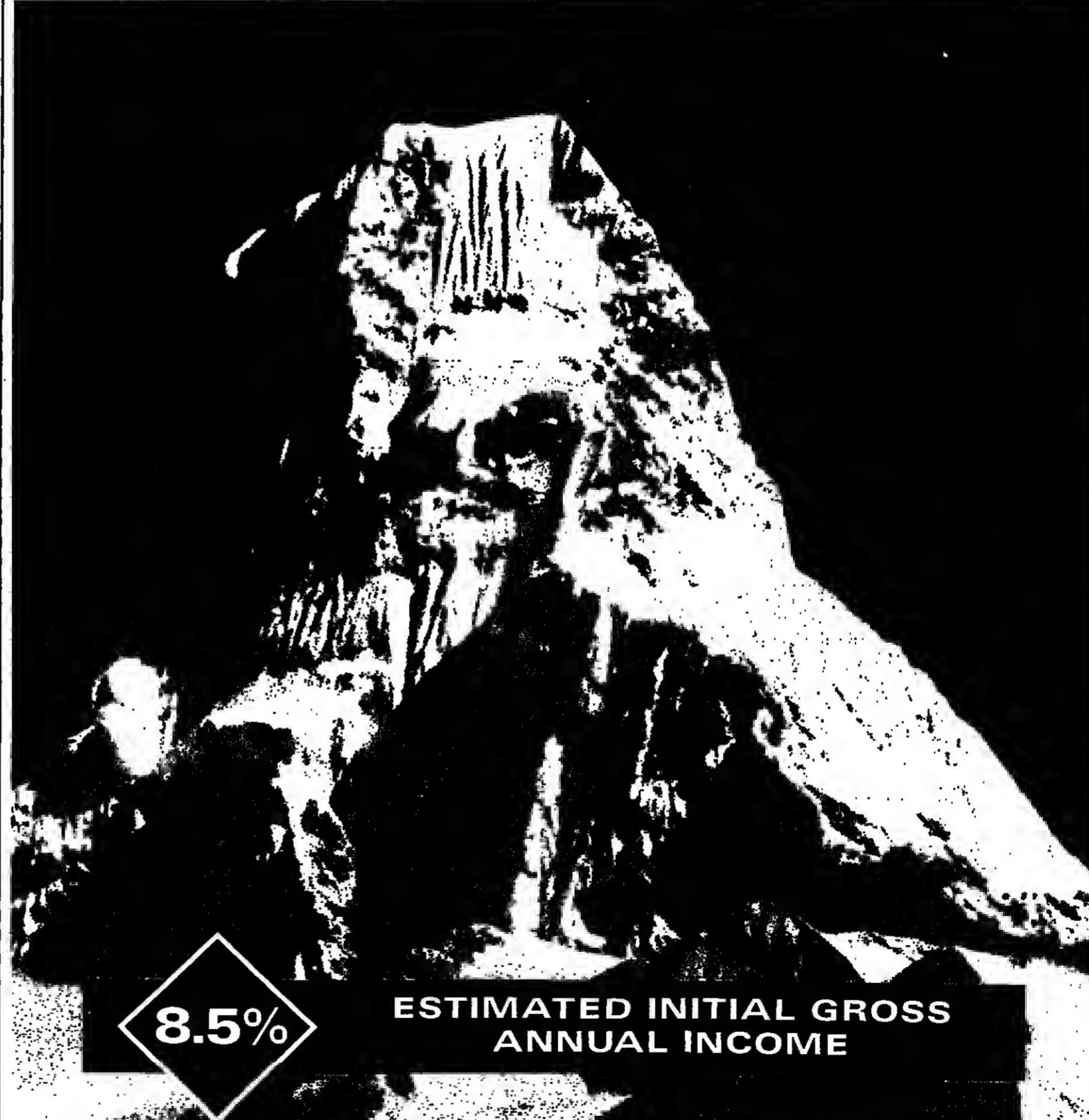
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Roller-coaster ride to riches

Spread betting is a high-risk gamble that lets you punt on anything from the predicted value of the euro to the number of times Gordon Brown sips a drink during his Budget speech. Get it right and you could make a fortune. By Simon Read

Spread betting occupies an uneasy position between serious investment and mainstream gambling - risking money for the sheer thrill of it. It is definitely not for the faint-hearted. On any particular trade, wins can realistically total hundreds of times your initial stake. However, the potential to lose a similar sum is just as great.

It offers the roller-coaster ride of derivative trading to everyone. Many of the UK's 20,000 account holders concentrate on sport, but two companies, City Index and IG Index, offer a range of financial markets.

For those wishing to speculate on the FTSE, foreign exchange markets or a range of commodities, spread betting provides a straightforward means of trading without broker's fees. This new way of betting has revolutionised wagering on sport. In a cricket match, every run scored can be vital to your financial position.

The ability to open and close trades in the middle of the event means that you need to keep a close eye on proceedings. At the start of each Test innings, a spread company will offer a market on the number of runs the batting side will achieve. If the initial "spread" is 280-300, you can choose to predict lower than 280 (selling) or higher than 300 (buying).

You choose to go lower than 280 (sell). The batting side collapses to 180 all out. You win the difference between 280 and 180 (or 100), multiplied by your stake.

If things had not gone to plan, and the batting side had reached a total of 500, you would lose the difference between 500 and 280 (220), again, multiplied by your stake.

Even a small stake of £1 can result in a very expensive afternoon in front of the TV set.

This principle can be applied to a variety of sporting and financial markets - the number of corners in a football match, or the number of points the FTSE rises. In every case you are risking your stake on each occurrence of an event.

Setting up a trading account with one of the four UK companies requires proof that you have the means to cover conceivable losses. A vast range of markets is then available to trade instantly by phone. These may be on the great economic issues of the day, such as the euro, or the faintly ridiculous. One company offered a market

on how many times Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown, would take a sip from his glass of water while giving the November Budget speech.

Spread betting can offer a means of hedging risk for companies. Where the strength of the pound affects a firm's export market, it is possible to set up a hedge against damaging currency fluctuations.

For many others, the spread betting companies simply offer an opportunity for private individuals to play the stock market with the big boys. The US has a culture of independent traders - individuals working from home with the aid of a PC (to track prices) and a trading account.

HOW SPREAD BETTING WORKS

TRADING ON THE EURO

You think that the euro launch will be a success and the pound is in for a bumpy ride in the next few weeks. How would you spread bet on this opinion?

- A spread company offers a quarterly market on the euro against sterling, closing on 12 March 1999. The previous days close was one euro = 7127. (Effectively 71.27p; decimal places are ignored).
- The company is offering a spread of 7076 - 7096.
- You think the pound will lose value (it will require more sterling to buy one euro) so you make a 'buy' trade at the quoted price of 7096 for a stake of £5.
- On the 12 March the value of the pound has dropped and it now takes 7185 to buy one euro.
- Your gain is the difference between the final value and your buy price. (7185 minus 7096). This gives a total gain of 89.
- Multiply this by your stake of £5. You win £445.

Undoubtedly the market for financial spread betting in the UK is growing as City traders open their own private accounts. Curiously, financial trading also appears to be popular, with a new breed of astute pensioners who are throwing off their gardening gloves in favour of the cut and thrust of the foreign exchange market.

Financial spread betting must come with a health warning. One client, who had a huy position during the October 1987 crash, was faced with a bill for £500,000. Spread betting debts are payable immediately and, unlike gambling debts, are recoverable by law.

The massive gearing on spread bets is reflected in the emotional ups and downs of the account-holder. The realisation that a bet is about to yield an enormous profit can become linked with your own sense of self-esteem and intellectual prowess. When losses appear, the opposite is true. A serious unexpected loss may be accompanied by a degree of shock, developing into something resembling clinical depression. Whatever quirks lurk in the account-holder's psychological armour, spread betting is liable to expose them ruthlessly.

However, the excitement and drama that a spread bet creates are unbeatable in any other form of speculation or investment. For those who are sure that they have information or knowledge that the spread companies have not considered, the rewards are there for the taking.

'Successful Spread Betting', by Geoff Harvey, is available from bookshops at £12.95. Independent readers may obtain a copy for only £9.95 post free (saving £3) from the publishers on 01423-507545



Save for a baby break

Flexible mortgages may hold the key. By Ian Morse

NONE OF us grudge spending money on our children, but the cost of a baby break can hit hard at family finances. For many households, the single most expensive item of monthly expenditure is a mortgage payment. Having a home loan sufficiently flexible to help cope with this change in circumstance seems sensible.

Women now account for 44 per cent of the workforce and more than one third of these have children aged under 16.

Estimates vary but the average cost per household of a nine-month baby break has been put at £9,000.

While recent changes in the law guarantee a minimum level of both maternity leave and pay, this applies only to those who are employed. For those who change jobs more often (often women), do part-time work, or have been with an employer for less time, benefits can be small.

Traditional mortgages are rigidly structured, with no facility for over- or under payment. If you have one, the only solution to saving for a baby break is to open a deposit account. But the interest you receive then is paid net of your marginal rate of income tax. Average gross returns for £10,000 on 90 days deposit are 5.5 per cent, falling to 4.24 per cent for a basic rate taxpayer and just 3.3 per cent for anyone paying the higher rate. Those rates are falling.

With current average mortgage rates at least 1.2 per cent higher, you will immediately save more interest than you can earn by paying extra cash into a flexible mortgage. New flexible mortgages have come to the market, some allowing both over- and under-payments. Providers such as First Active, Legal & General, Virgin One and Standard Life have developed loans that allow you to overpay, then borrow back the surplus you have built up.

Simonne Gaessen, 33, works as an independent financial adviser with Fiona Price & Partners, a London-based firm. She says: "Right now I'm thinking about re-mortgaging. The key to good financial planning is to pick an option that meets as many changes of circumstance as possible. I have to consider the possibility of having children and any reduction in earnings resulting from this. But I also have to think about unforeseen career changes," Gneessen adds.

"The benefits of flexibility

need to be balanced against other types of mortgage, such as capped, fixed or discounted loans. These may be cheaper but do not necessarily provide all the facilities of a flexible mortgage.

"Flexible loans can be ideal for young high earners who have a basic salary with big bonuses. They can pay in bonuses now then borrow back some of this later if needed. This could be very useful during maternity leave."

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IND 1300W

UP TO £120,000

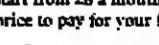
from 27p A DAY*

LIFE COVER

Surely your family is worth it?

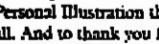
Guaranteed Tax-Free Payout!

The Friendly Assurance Plan can provide up to £120,000 of life cover for 10 years. So if the worst should happen, your loved ones would receive a guaranteed tax-free cash payout. What's more, premiums start from £5 a month - that's just 27p a day! A small price to pay for your family's financial security.



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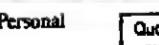
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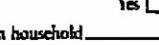
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Ethnic is chic again, but care is needed to find the right items – strong shapes are the most stylish. By Karen Falconer

All the world's a store

Think again if talk of ethnic trends evokes images of colourful Indian bazaars and ageing hippies. And this time think big, think bold, think clutter-free karma. For, while ethnicity is clearly ruling the domestic roost, it has been born again as global minimalism.

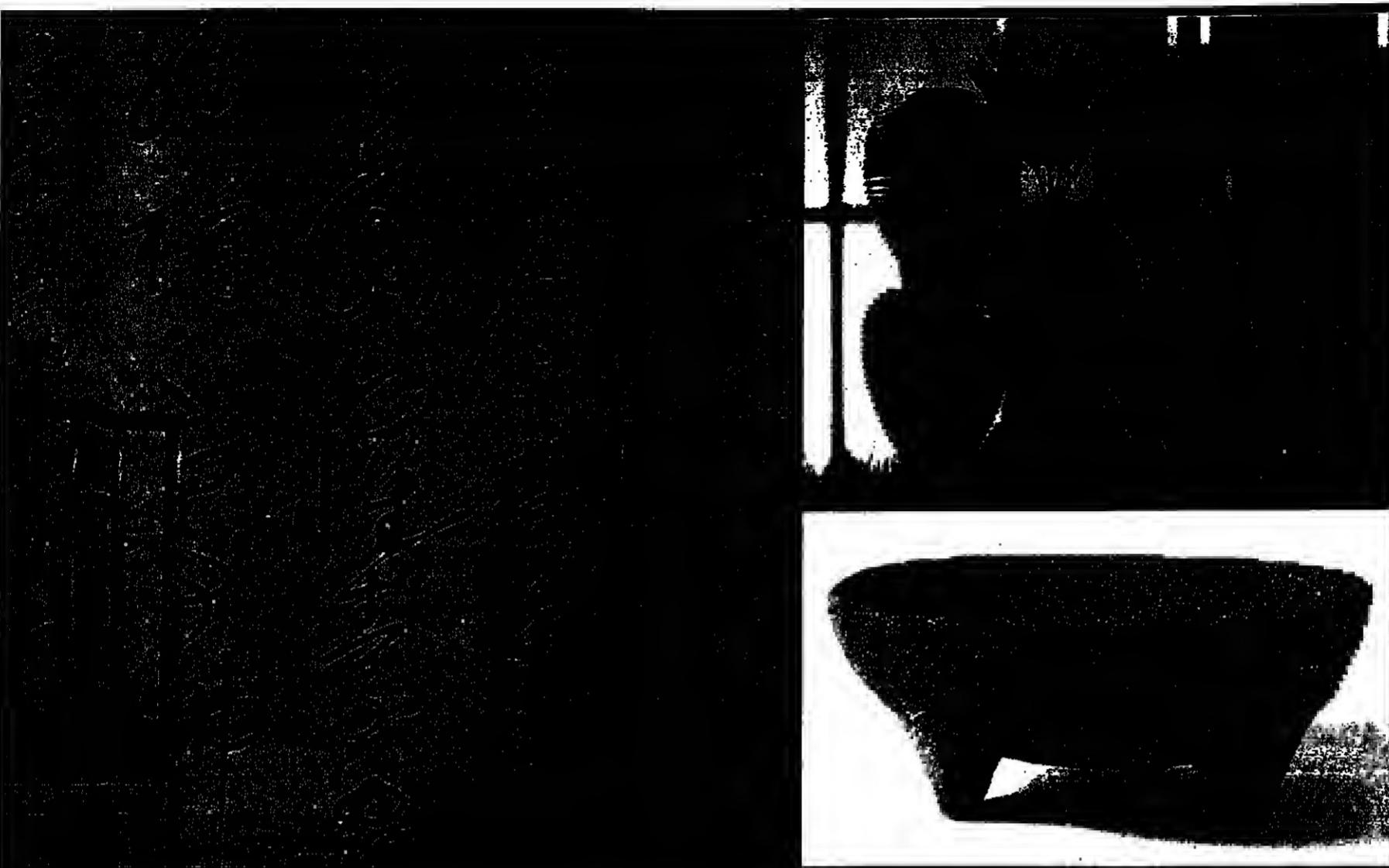
The new global chic is about beautiful pieces and a very modern look. Quiet and cultured, it is the ultimate in all that is calm, meditative and perfectly proportioned. Yet, as Michael Reeves (1998 International Interior Designer of the Year) reflects, it can be large in scale and is certainly not afraid to make dramatic statements via shape or colour.

In Reeves's South Kensington shop, African masks (£165), heavy wooden shanti stools (from £325), and Mogul shields (£720) provide highlights around modern sleek chairs (he's about to launch a collection in Joseph, Fulham Road) and imposing, in-laid cabinets.

"I love art deco, but 100 per cent art deco is dead," he says. "The whammy, wow factor comes from something old, ethnic or oriental. It's the eclectic mix and the scale of things that matters. I'm not one for Chinese, Oriental or African knick-knacks. I use pieces for statements, anything ethnic that has a very strong shape."

Reeves opened his shop after realising that he spent most of his time scouting around trade fairs or antique markets for his interior clients. Among his favourite pieces at the moment are Chinese hardwood chairs (£750), and aged wooden cartwheels which he mounts on wooden plinths with steel rods, and which are as effective as any modern sculpture. At £275 they are not cheap but, nevertheless, are in short supply. "I just went to the dealer to buy another 10," says Reeves. "But I only managed to secure four as they've sold out so fast."

Contrasts – scale and texture, old and new – feature strongly in fellow interior designer William Yeoward's warehouse in Battersea. He's transformed it from an old wreck into a place where, he says, people would want to live.



Above: 'Ming' fabric, £29.99/metre. John Lewis. Top right: mango wood pots, £305-£385. Yeoward South. Bottom right: Mexican basalt planter, £235. Encompass

After working for others, like Tri-cia Guild, Yeoward decided to go it alone: "I'd started travelling – Asia, Australia – and realised there was a lot in the world that was wonderful. So I started to import stuff. I love really good craftsmanship – bone, basketware, pottery – but often when I see good quality work, the design isn't what I'd chose, so I work with them. For example, in Indonesia the bottles are covered in that. But his imports, hunted out from Mexican villages and made using

indigenous skills he studied and worked in Mexico and now spends many months there each year) have already been noticed by the likes of David Champion, Louis Vuitton and the General Trading Company.

"In Mexico, there's a different attitude to artisans" he says, anxious to knock back any idea that he might be exploiting people. "They're a respected class, revered for the traditional, beautiful things they make, turned into their own art form."

He sells several different ranges:

latticed furniture, made in Mexico by a Frenchman from sustainable tropical hardwood (from £220 for a footstool, or £1,035 a loveseat); sandcast aluminium furniture (from £1,189 for a table and four chairs), calada lamps (from £169) and hand-carved basalt sculptures (pestle and mortar £12, planter £165). "The artisans have taken the traditional pestle and mortar form, for which they are famous, a few steps further" explains Simon Scott Ray. "As they are non-porous, they're suitable for

beautiful, minimalist interiors filled with lilies or orchids. Or as bird baths or sculptures outside." He also sells antique sweet moulds as candle holders (from £160). "If things look good together, they can be antique, Mexican, or Swedish – they all work for me," he adds.

This is the essence of Browns Living, the homewares extension to the designer fashion store, where Vietnamese crackled porcelain bowls (£18) and black lacquered plates (£45) are equally at home with

woven Vietnamese chicken baskets (from £35) or African oak plates (£60). There are even cushions (£1,395) and holsters (£250) made of antique Japanese kimonos. "We constantly have new things coming from all over the world – Europe, Middle East, Africa, America," says the manager, Guyt Benjamin.

Finding beautiful products from around the world is certainly not a problem today. Country-specific shops, like the India Shop in Marlborough (mail order catalogue also available) or the more Indonesian-biased Ananda in Brighton, are springing up all across Britain. The Somerset-based Sala Design, for example, has a wonderful, diverse collection of contemporary African pieces, including bowls and jars made from Kenyan soapstone (from £3.95), sisal baskets (from £6.95) and milk jugs made from African old wood (from £24.95).

Many high street stores also have an excellent selection: John Lewis has Andrew Martin's striking fabrics, including Ming (£29.99 per metre) in a choice of rust red, caramel or cream with large black calligraphy (unfortunately, there's more style than substance as the words mean nothing); and hand-woven Gabbeh rugs made by Iranian tribes. Designer's Guild has a selection of Japanese incense (from £27) and beautifully packaged Vietnamese rice bowls (£4.50) and teapots (£3.95).

Modern ethnic is modern chic. Wherever one looks, it will be there in some form. But, it's worth remembering that it only works when dipped into in an occasional, selective manner. The art is in spotting a beautiful piece (or two) from around the world that speaks volumes, but which is too modest to want to be the centre of attention at the household party.

Ananda: 01273 725307
Browns Living: 0171-514 0000
Designers' Guild: 0171-351 5775
Encompass: 01256 862353
John Lewis: 0171-629 7711 for nearest store
Michael Reeves: 0171-225 2501
Sala: 01935 827051
The India Shop: 01672 515585
Yeoward South: 0171-498 4811

SOMETIMES
IT'S EASIER
TO TALK
TO SOMEONE
YOU
DON'T LIKE.



PHOTOGRAPH BY STEPHEN SAYER

When you have a problem, it's the most natural thing in the world to want to talk it through with someone.

Sometimes, though, this creates another problem: who's the best person to confide in?

An obvious choice would be a close friend. But let's face it, we don't always choose our friends for their amazing powers of tact, diplomacy and discretion. Tell one person, and you may end up telling the world.

You may be lucky enough to be able to talk to someone in your family. Then again, you may be one of the large number of people who find talking to your nearest and dearest agonisingly embarrassing.

A girlfriend or boyfriend? If you can, great. But sometimes we don't want to expose our weaknesses to those who fancy us.

The Samaritans
www.samaritans.org

And sometimes your relationship is

the very problem you want to discuss.

That's where The Samaritans can be useful. We're more discreet than your best mate, we'll listen as carefully as your girlfriend or boyfriend, and we're as sympathetic as your family. We're also non-judgemental, unshockable, and extremely experienced.

Our national number is 0345 90 90 90, and you can e-mail us on jo@samaritans.org or visit our homepage at www.samaritans.org. We're available 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

And you don't have to be climbing up the walls before you call us – any kind of problem, big or small, is a good enough reason to pick up the phone.

Call now. You'll find we're remarkably easy to talk to.

The Samaritans
www.samaritans.org

And sometimes your relationship is

SHOPTALK

YOU'VE WOKEN up to the ghastly realisation that it's Valentine's Day tomorrow, and although your lover professes not to subscribe to such commercial claptrap, an offering is needed to avert big-time sulking.

But what to get? Shopping experts from Tupper and Harrods have joined forces this year to offer succour at the Harrods Valentine Help Desk. Open from 10am-6pm, and located in the fine jewellery department on the ground floor, the Help Desk team will do their damndest to suggest the perfect gift within your budget, however tricky your Valentine. They'll even

feed you chocolates while they quiz you as to your sweetheart's desire.

Their aim is to give you lots of original and innovative shopping advice. They won't just suggest champagne and flowers: they'll recommend the trendiest brands and the hippest flowers, or hot pink Prada lingerie, pure white linen sheets, or dinner for two delivered directly to your door.

You can phone the help desk (0171-730 1234) but unless you order something wildly extravagant – a grand piano, for instance – they won't be able to deliver in time for the big day.

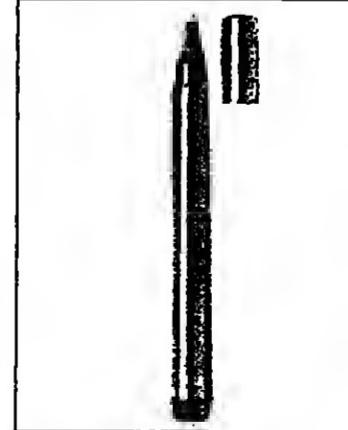


SIX OF THE BEST

LOVE LETTER BUYS



Love Letters, fruit jellies, £2.50, Habitat (0845 334 433)



Silver perfume pen, £12.25, Jo Malone (0171-726 0202)



Violet-scented purple ink, £12, The Italian Corner (0171-499 9469)



David Hayward's silver inkwell, £149, The Room (0171-225 3225)



Aluminium paperweight, £6.95, Ocean mail order (0870 348 4840)



Glass inkwell and pen stopper, £7.50, Smythson (0171-629 8555)

I WANT TO OWN...
FOODIE GADGETS

A man's place is in the kitchen

Bored of the usual round of Belgian truffles and candlelit restaurant meals? Worried that last year's gift of Agent Provocateur lingerie was considered to have been for your benefit rather than hers? Can't get a reservation and/or a baby-sitter for love nor money? If you answer in the affirmative to any or all of the above, then you may still be racking your brains as to how to apply the tender, personal touch to tomorrow's big night in.

Yes, a Valentine's Day gift constructed out of your toenail clippings would be unique - but perhaps pulling off a Jean-Pierre Marco what's-his-name White by preparing a special meal with your own gnarled hands would be worth more. Fairy Liquid points in the long run. Like *South Park's* Chef said: "There's nothing more sexy than a man who can cook, except maybe Tia Carrere in a bikini."

If the task seems insurmountable, even in this enlightened new age, then maybe it's because you've been wrestling with the wrong tools. (People who say "you can't blame the tools" have obviously never owned a cheap, non-stick frying pan.) Whether or not a real man cooks or eats quiche is largely irrelevant, compared to his choice of utensils to chop, toast, broil and batter.

So take a look around your kitchen. If you don't have the following items, then you could always put your love to the test by suggesting the Pizza Hut Valentine's Day special.

Look sharp
Name: Global knife block and eight-piece knife set.
Price: £395.
Stockist: John Lewis (0171-639 7711) for nearest store.

Description: If onions had feelings, then they'd probably forgive you for skinning them alive with one of these razor sharp implements. Designed by Komin Yamada in 1985, each knife is created from a single piece of stainless steel; a tapered, spotty handle seamlessly merging into a finely honed blade. As

Crocodile Dundee famously said: "Now this is a knife." The polished steel block contains eight of them, including a flexible 15cm utility knife, a 20cm cook's knife and a 22cm bread knife.

Style: ★★★★
Anything else worth considering? A Global ceramic knife sharpener (£59) to keep the blades fresh. For something more traditional, Wusthof Trident knives combine old school blades with a black, abrasive-resistant polyamide handle (£39.95 for the bread knife, from Heal's, 0171-636 1666).

Pans people
Name: Cuprinol 26cm frying pan.
Price: £29.
Stockist: 01603 488 019.

Description: If Vic Reeves was to hit Bob Mortimer with this, he'd probably kill him. Chance would be a fine thing, however, since these copper-skinned, stainless steel-lined pans are so heavy you'd need to do boot-camp training just to lift them on and off the hob. These are pans for men. Each comes with a 25-year guarantee, hardly surprising given the bolts they've used to hold the handles on - I've seen hull doors on ocean-going car ferries with less substantial welding.

Style: ★★★★
Anything else worth considering? Obviously there's a whole Cuprinol range (the £138, 24cm, 3-litre sauté pan and lid are essential) but if you find shiny copper reminiscent of knick-knacks gathering dust in rural pubs, then you may prefer something made of pure stainless steel. Meyer's Professional range (£48 for a 20cm saucepan and lid, from Heal's, 0171-636 1666) are not only stylish, but are also dishwasher safe, essential for the modern man's culinary requirements.

The dirty dozen
Name: Siemens SE 25530 Dish-washer.
Price: £699.
Stockist: 01908 328 400.
Description: It may be hellish to keep clean and scratch-free, but since when have you taken such obvious domestic considerations into account before making a purchase?

This 60cm-wide stainless steel beauty is conscientious (its Aquastop cleaning system actively seeks out and destroys food deposits), ecologically considerate (it uses 14 litres of water per wash and has a quick wash programme), and user-friendly (the bottom basket includes a foldable plate rack to make space for blackened casserole dishes). Style: ★★★★
Anything else worth considering? Smeg (01235 861 090) do a range of neatly designed dishwashers. Their stainless steel eight-programme machine, the 60cm-wide DWFI (£599) holds 12 place settings, includes Aquastop flood protection,

employs an air fan condenser for drying, and has nice chunky steel knobs. It's only let down by the fact that it's a gas-guzzler, using as much as 18 litres of water per wash. Let them eat shrimps
Name: Britannia SI-12TBF-SS Barbecue.
Price: £3,000 (plus £990 for a 120cm hood).
Stockist: 01253 471 111.

Description: Indoor barbecue! The five gas-burner hot plate on this 120cm cooker comes with an added extra:

an electric lava stone barbecue, perfect for when you've wasted an entire box of strikes trying to light

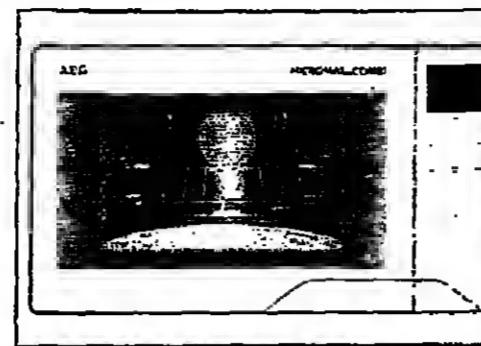
your rusty one in the back garden. To the right of the main, 90cm oven, is a small 30cm second oven, which has a rotisserie for spit-roasting. Or, if you're the veggie persuasion, you can always use it for finishing off a Victoria sponge. What do you mean, you don't know how to make cakes? Didn't you learn anything from King Alfred's incompetence? Style: ★★★★
Anything else worth considering? Smeg's 90cm dual-fuel, single-fronted AI cooker (£1,275, 01235 861 090) is a substantial machine. The hob has five gas-hobs (including one for fish) and an ultra-rapid one for burning stuff on, while the fan-assisted electric oven has a bottom element to make sure the food you've carbonised on top is at least defrosted in the middle. If that all sounds like too much hard work, then you can opt for a combination microwave/oven instead. AEG's 850-watt Micromat-combi 625 (£495, 01635 572 700) looks good, and defrosts, microwaves and roasts.

THOSE LITTLE EXTRAS
Don't forget the morning after: the best coffee and toast come courtesy of La Pavoni's Europiccola espresso maker (£360, 0171-722 7648) and Siemens Porsche-designed TT 9110 cool wall, two-slice toaster (£89,

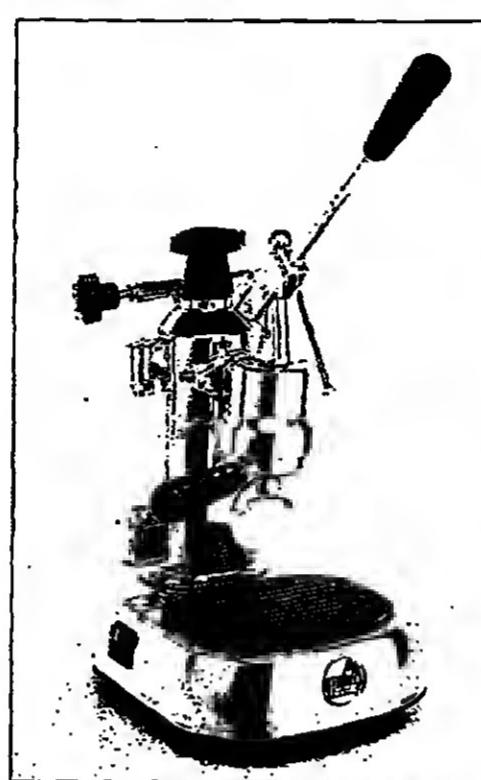
01908 328 400). It's got 900 turbo charged watts under the hood, plus 11-stage browning control with LED indicators, and the capacity to hold bread up to a satisfying doorstop thickness of 34mm. For those preferring a cup of Earl Grey to start the day, there are several good stainless steel kettles on the market. The best bargain is Breville's Classique Cordless KT1 (£39.99, 0800 525 089), which holds 3.5 pints of water, has a removable base, a concealed element and a tasteful green on/off button.

Shaun Phillips

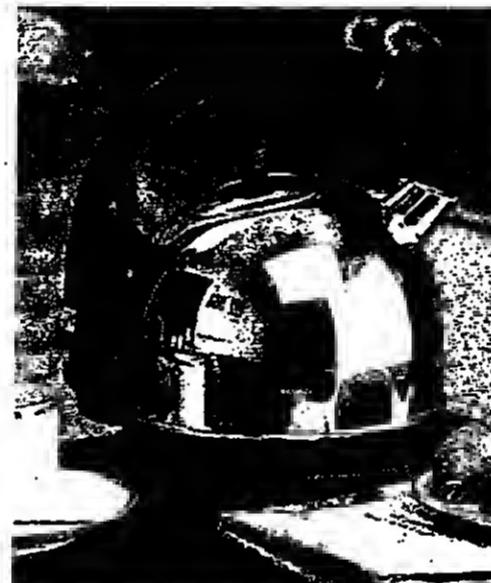
Deputy Editor ZM Magazine



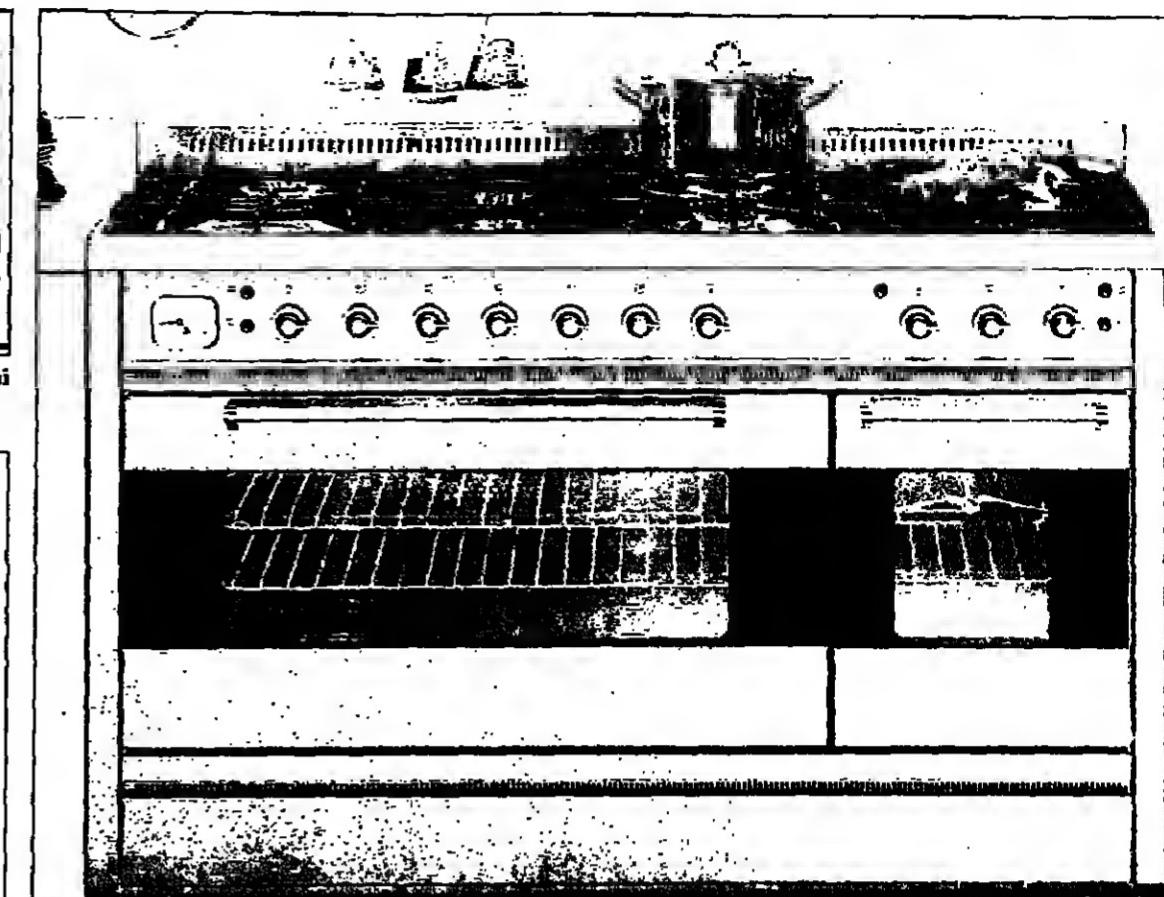
Two into one does go in the Micromat-combi 625, £495, AEG (01635 572 700)



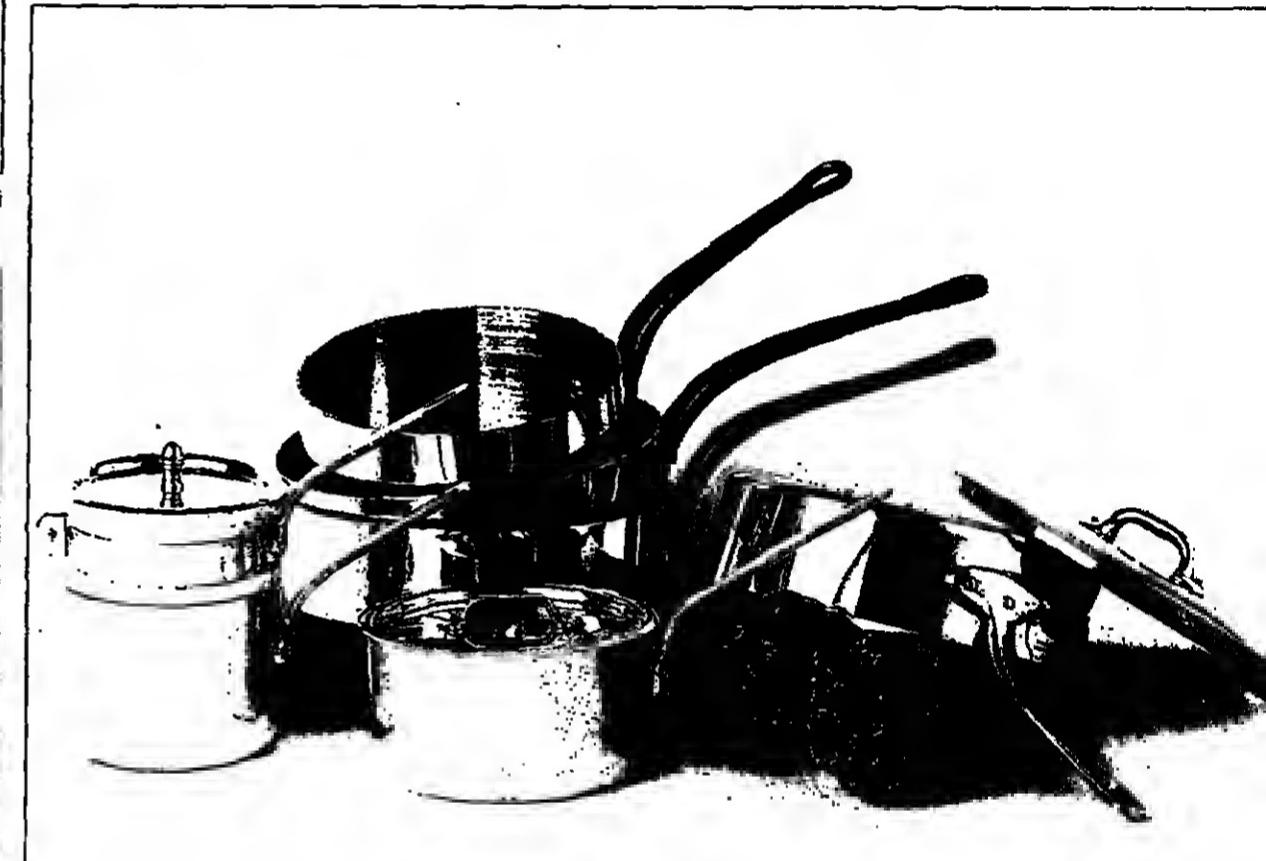
Europiccola espresso maker, £360, La Pavoni (0171-722 7648)



Classique Cordless KT1 kettle, £39.99, Breville (0800 525 089)



Cook up a storm with the SI-12TBF-SS Barbecue, £3,000, Britannia (01253 471 111)



Forget Delta's omelette pan - these seriously sturdy Cuprinol copper pans are for real men, ITC (01603 488 019)

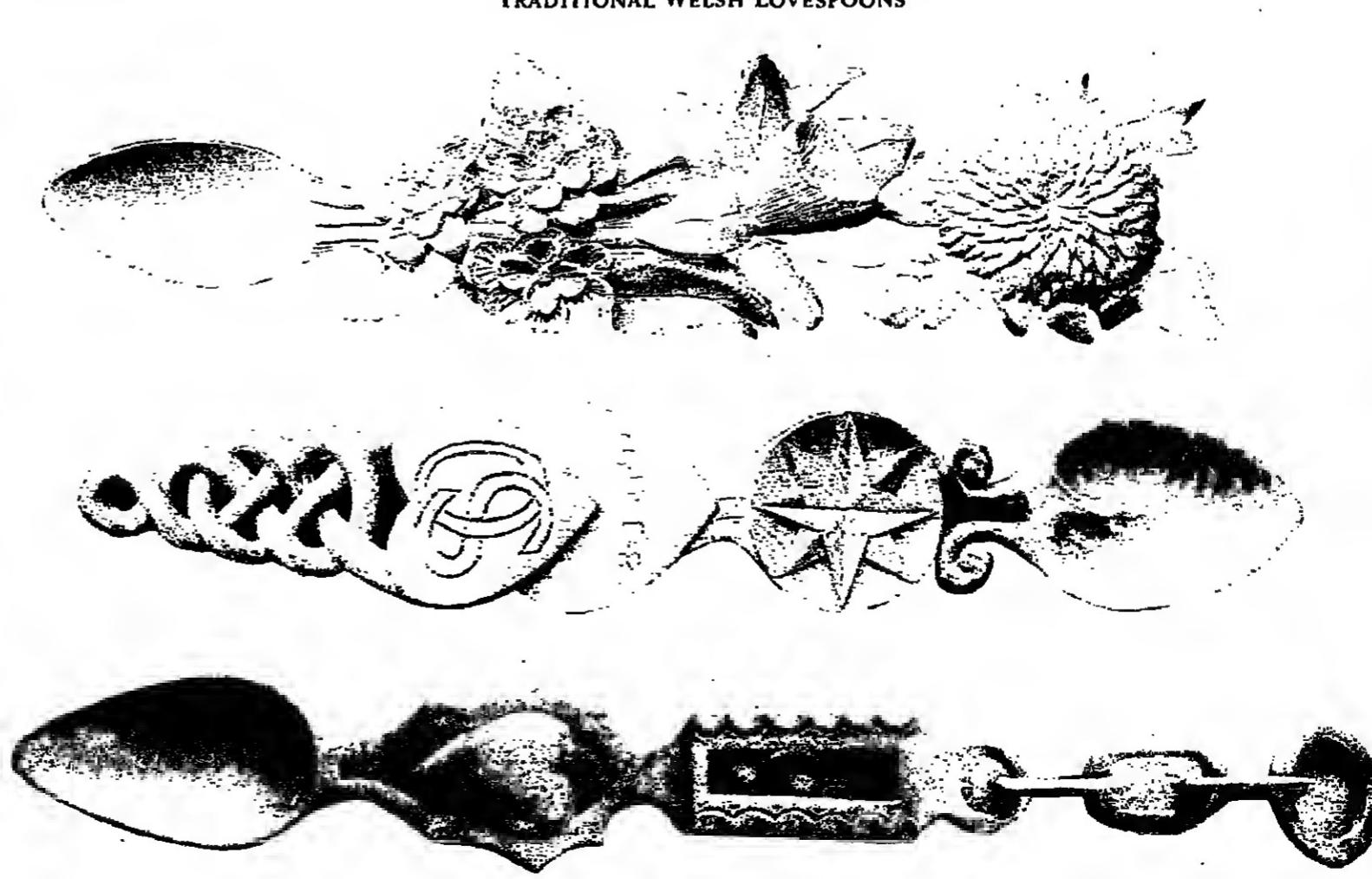
fruit woods. One of Mr Thomas's favourite commissions is an anniversary spoon, which took two weeks to make from one piece of pale lime wood: "It has six chain links representing 60 years, two balls in a cage for the happy couple wrapped or trapped in love, and a wild rose on the front. My little joke was to put a thorn in the side."

When you buy a handmade lovespoon, make sure it is the genuine article by looking at the shape. It should be curved in profile like a metal spoon and is usually carved on the back. Batch-produced souvenir lovespoons are flat-hacked to enable machines to cut them out before they are finished by hand. Castle Crafts in Cardiff and the Lovespoon Gallery in Mumbles sell these spoons (starting at £3) as well as commissioned spoons.

Visit the Museum of Welsh Life in St Fagan's, just outside Cardiff. If you want to check out one of the best collections of antique lovespoons, it includes the oldest known lovespoon, which is dated 1687. No bigger than a modern dessert spoon, it has a hollowed-out handle with six free-floating carved wooden balls and has developed a rich mellow patina through 300 years of handling.

In Welsh folklore, the balls symbolise the number of children the suitor hopes for. So if you receive a copy of this spoon on Valentine's Day (£10, from the museum shop), you know where his spooning might end.

JILL ALLENBY



Lovespoons by Arthur Llewellyn Thomas (top and centre, 01222 341 706) and Peter and Lynette Coupland (bottom, 01656 659 264)

Dial M for missile

The BMW M Coupe is the nearest thing to an E-type since the E-type. By Gavin Green

When is Jaguar going to build a new E-type? After all, Rover has unveiled its new Mini (on sale in 2000) and VW has given us its new Beetle. When is that other great, seminal car of the Sixties going to get revivified, redesigned and relaunched? No matter what Jaguar may be planning – and the Coventry manufacturer is refusing to confirm whether it's working on such a vehicle – there is already a car that fits the bill. It is the BMW M Coupe.

THE INDEPENDENT ROAD TEST

In many ways, it is like the hard-top coupe version of the E-type – which sold better than the convertible. Its styling is all trousers. Or, to put it in a car context, it is all long bonnet, short cabin, short tail. The body is like a giant cowling for the engine, with exiguous cabin thrown in for free. It even drives like an E-type – powered by a bug-eyed gutsy, big, straight-six engine, which gives monstrous power when commanded. Yet the steering is rather vague, and the ride is so firm that, on occasion, you can really feel broken Tarmac kicking your backside. Also, you drive behind that long, long bonnet – just as with an E-type. You feel you're riding a missile as much as driving a car.

The cockpit, too, is rather cobbled together, without that homogenous feel of a mass-made, carefully conceived, beautifully built BMW 3-series or 5-series.

The pull-out headlamp switch is straight out of the Sixties. However, the pedals are grouped far too close together so that those who are big or foot will find the M Coupe rather hard to drive. And the steering wheel is incongruously big, which doesn't help the steering feel, and underlines the view that you're driving a modern iteration of a classic car, as opposed to a brand-new 1999 supercar.

As for carrying space, there is virtually none. Just a small batch-back boot. There is no back seat. However, this is no car for carrying; it is a car for driving. And what huge fun it is to punt along a winding B-road! The 3.2-litre straight six, borrowed from the M3, is one of the world's great motors. It can rev from



The M coupe: BMW's answer to the E-type – 'you feel as if you are riding a missile, not driving'

kick-over to well over 7,000rpm with sublime ease and inspirational musical accompaniment. And yet this is a vehicle that can tootle along as gently as the most non-descript hatchback.

Bury the throttle, at any moment, and the car's men will be transmogrified. One kick of the accelerator pedal is enough to stir the devil. And what acceleration! Going from 0-60mph in less than five seconds makes the M Coupe the fastest-accelerating BMW of them all. The action doesn't stop until a limiter spoils the fun at 155mph. This is an outrageously fast car.

In fact it is an outrageous car, period. It looks disjointed, unnatural and small – apart from that long nose – with wide wings covering huge wheels and tyres that look too big for the body.

It has a graceful front, identical to that of the Z3 roadster, but the rest of the car is a bit of a mess. It is a car for driving. And what huge fun it is to punt along a winding B-road! The 3.2-litre straight six, borrowed from the M3, is one of the world's great motors. It can rev from

Make, model and price:
BMW M Coupe £40,595.
Engine: 3201cc, straight-six
engine, 24 valves, 321bhp at
7400rpm.
Transmission: Five-speed
manual gearbox, rear-wheel
drive.
Performance: Maximum speed
155mph (governed), 0-60mph in
4.8 seconds, 25mpg.

driven few cars that have turned heads faster.

Its unconventional looks is also one of its great appeals. European car manufacturers are going through a terribly sensible, self-righteous phase just now. There are few "hero" cars – madcap machines that make you feel good, even if they make little sense. But the M Coupe is such a car. It is a testament to the go-it-alone bravery of BMW as much

SPECIFICATIONS

RIVALS

Lotus Esprit GT3 £40,125. Mid-engined plastic-bodied British star. Fast and handles well, but lacks the quality of the BMW and isn't as exciting to drive.
Mitsubishi 3000GT V8 £45,800. Rather BMW-like in manners and design, but far more handsome. Mind you, quality is not up to BMW standards.

no real fun for the driver.
Nissan Skyline GTR £50,000. Nissan unlike any other. Awesomely fast, outstandingly capable, incredibly high-tech. One of the world's great cars.
TWR Cerbera 4.2 V8 £41,100. Rather BMW-like in manners and design, but far more handsome. Mind you, quality is not up to BMW standards.

as it is to BMW's engineers for being able to produce such an exciting individualistic machine.

And if you fancy a roadster version, to bring us back to the E-type analogy, BMW can oblige. The M Roadster version is the same price, and mechanically identical. However, the M Coupe is the better car. Replacing the soft-top roof with a big plank of steel bugle increases the car's torsional stiffness, greatly

improving handling and road behaviour. Besides, there is something far more individual about the coupe. There are many other small, fast convertibles. But there are no other modern high-performance coupes quite like this one. It makes no sense. But how it plays with your senses – serenading you, charming you. It is like a big toy, and it is no more logical than most other toys. But what a toy!

Like a Ferrari in a Savile Row suit

A saloon that performs like a supercar, the BMW M series is a superb second-hand buy. By James Ruppert

THIS MAY come as a big surprise, but not all BMWs are equal. We all know that there are small, medium and large BMWs, but if you bothered to look more closely at the badge on the boot, you might also spot a subtle M logo. That M stands for Motorsport and it is BMW's premium performance brand which makes models that already have an enviable reputation for brilliant performance and handling, even more exciting.

Side by side, apart from a lower stance and wider alloy wheels, an M series and a common-or-garden 3, or 5 series may look similar. However, open the bonnet, or put the M-series car on a ramp and what you will see is a radically reworked beast. An M series BMW is nothing less than a road legal racing car.

No wonder BMW and sports-car enthusiasts all over the world get excited by the very mention of the letter M. It stands for superlative build quality, uncompromising performance and serious understatement. It is the perfect combination and as a used-car prospect, a very affordable and hugely desirable package.

The M story started in the early Seventies when the newly formed Motorsport division began work on a lightweight coupé for the road and competition. The result was the aluminium-panelled, 200bhp CSL in 1972, which showed the direction the company was going in.

However, the first BMW to wear the M badge could not have been more unlike the subtle saloons that were to make the marque's reputation. The M1 had an Italian-designed body, an engine in the middle and like any self-respecting 165mph supercar, only seated two. Its six-

cylinder, 24-valve engine would go on to power legendary and more affordable M-series models such as the M5 and M635CSi.

Enthusiasts believe that the first true Motorsport product was a 5-series saloon, the M5 in 1986. With the engine from the M1 in a discreet and very sober four-door body it was an astonishingly quick yet subtle car. Putting that engine in the 635 coupe gave the marque a much higher profile. For many though, the best M series of all was the M3 in 1986.

The M3 looked similar to the standard two-door saloon, but just about everything else was different, from the body panels, to the suspension and race tuned 2.3 litre, 16-valve engine, which delivered a top speed of 150mph.

Available only in left-hand drive it nevertheless appealed to buyers

who wanted a specifically produced car to qualify for international racing, which it went on to dominate. Other Ms followed. Convertibles, new model M5s in 1990 and M3s in 1993, although neither had the same raw character as the early models.

More recently the Z3 has received the M treatment and got a mixed reception. Yet M-series models remain as popular as ever.

To truly understand the appeal of the M series it is important to pay a visit to Europe's leading specialist, Munich Legends, surprisingly located in Sussex. Outside of BMW's own museum in Munich, you won't see more race and championship-winning M cars.

Tony Halse has been dealing in M series cars for 10 years. "What people like are the sensible running costs and the Germanic build qual-

ity. The best description I've ever heard was that these cars are Ferraris in a Savile Row suit. Buyers are enthusiasts and that is the key thing. My customers can have fun at a track day on Sunday, then use it on the school run on Monday."

According to Halse the first M5 is the rarest (just 187 in right-hand drive) and most fun. Original M3s are an icon and a true driver's car. You can buy M3s for as little as £5,000 to £20,000. Many are recent imports from Europe and not all are as pristine as they could be. A full service history, accident free and engineer-inspected M series is the only safe way to buy.

I would defy any car enthusiast to see and drive a BMW M series like these without being seriously tempted to write out a cheque. Munich Legends 01825 740456

Rover's brief, from BMW, is now to make stately, conservative, genteel motor cars for conservative, genteel people. There is nothing wrong with this future direction, and it ties in precisely with Germany's general view of Britain's motor industry as Museum Motors Pte.

Or rather, Museum Motors Aktiengesellschaft – because apart from Jaguar, Aston Martin and Lotus, the Germans own every great British motoring brand (Rover, Austin, Morris, MG, Mini, Land Rover, Range Rover, Rolls-Royce, Bentley and many more). Somehow,

Besides, some good news may be just around the corner. The new Mini is just over a year away from market. Its job, at least in part, is to save Britain's biggest car-makers. If successful, its legacy may well be even greater than that of its predecessor.

MOTORING

Registration Numbers

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AM-A	1,406
AM-B	1,407

Paying for a life of grime

There are dangerous people out there – DIY enthusiasts trying to boost the value of their homes. By Penny Jackson

SOME people a hammer and they will be nailing shelves to the wall before you can draw breath. No one can accuse the British of a lack of enthusiasm when it comes to DIY home repairs, but they may be a little wanting on the quality front if the evidence of a television programme broadcast by ITV last week is anything to go by.

Collapsing walls, sloping shelves and years of little progress dogged the worst of the "Do it Yourselves" who amazingly still managed to show real pride in their work despite its dubious execution. All this is fine, of course, if the DIYers stay put, but rather more worrying if they decide to sell and a buyer isn't in on the secret.

David McKenna, who runs a building company in Bromley, Kent, has become suspicious of the number of jobs carried out by what he is told are cowboy builders who have done a bunk. "One look at the dodgy tools lying around and it's a reasonable guess that it was, in fact, the owner who messed up the job. Doors are always being bunged upside down, and I've seen new openings for windows propped up with bits of wood because nobody thought to put in lintels."

But at least he is called in to put things right. The buyers of a huge, newly converted Victorian house in south-east London will not be so lucky. "The owner works in the theatre but has done all the work himself. It is horrendous. Nothing has been done properly, but the worst of it is that, when the painting is done and the floors sanded, it will fool anyone who doesn't get beneath the surface."

Some of the construction work McKenna sees beggars belief. "At the moment I am spending every day looking at an appalling extension built by the owner. Someone must have told him he needed air bricks for a flat roof, but instead of using a couple each side he has used them all the way round,

'Owners blame cowboy builders who have done a bunk. But one look and you know they did it'

somewhere with loads of space into something special was very exciting, but since then we have had sleepless nights. We've been tired, fed up and ended up arguing. Our three children are used to coming home from school to chaos and we haven't had a holiday for four years."

She lives not a million miles from some of the DIYers featured in the ITV programme but is confident that her husband's workmanship is in a higher league. "Even so, he is self-taught; so he tends to come back from the pub with instructions from an electrician drawn on the back of a cigarette packet. It can take a whole day to get one light to work. I do the rustling around and spend hours in plumber's merchants trying to describe what sort of pipe we need. The hardest lessons

are that everything costs far more than you imagine, and you have to finish one job before starting on the next, however tempting it is to start on the fun things. But there have been wonderful moments, such as discovering a lovely marble fireplace under layers of paint."

The area just north of Derby is particularly popular with DIYers, with a terrific demand for unmodernised houses, according to Chris Brown of Boxall Brown & Jones. But he warns buyers that the Grants' experience is all too common. "It is hard to price a job if you are not sure what is involved and so you have to be prepared to spend up to 50 per cent more than you had anticipated," he says.

In residential areas where property values have risen quickly in a short

Fear of injury or worse deters most

people from tackling plumbing and electrical jobs, but cosmetic work can be done better by some in the trade. Many of the time-consuming and costly restoration jobs can be done gradually and to enormous effect – handiwork that genuinely impresses. But this purposeful approach is rather different from the equivalent in the home of the man who is always tinkering with his car. Henry Woods, of the London estate agents Douglas & Gordon, says that, although some owners never stop "improving" their property, after 20 years they haven't managed to change the lead pipes.

In residential areas where property values have risen quickly in a short

time, there is a temptation for people to become investor-builders overnight. The advice from agents is that thorough checks should be made on such places before buying. They may appear perfect, with paint sparkling, but that's of little comfort if you get an electric shock every time that you take a shower. South of the river is particularly ripe territory for London's DIY entrepreneurs, says Mr Woods. "I went into one flat to find a man holding an enormous saw designed for cutting logs. He was trying to cut a thin plywood-and-Formica top with it. The whole kitchen was terrible, a complete disaster and held together roughly with nails. The couple were doing it up to sell. Needless to say it didn't."



Jane and Rod Grant in their Derby home: 'It has taken over our lives'

Page One

STEPPING STONES

ONE COUPLE'S PROPERTY STORY



'Friends thought we were mad to buy' – Mandy and Syd

MANDY EVANS, a TV producer, and her partner Syd – who have bought three properties since 1984 – were the first of their peers to buy; but were surprised at friends' reactions. "One said: 'You're really stupid.' They thought we were mad," Mandy remembers.

However, their only alternative was a squalid rented flat in Hackney; and Mandy believes that their backgrounds also influenced them: "Our parents had bought, so we thought we should."

She admits to a certain naivety about the process: "We were told we could borrow up to £50,000 but we didn't dare: it seemed such a lot of money at the time."

They viewed only two properties and plumped for the second, a converted, ground-floor two-bedroom flat overlooking Hackney's main road, which cost £23,000. The flat, in a listed building, had certain advantages: "It was close to friends and to a lower market and near a good pub and fish-and-chip shop. There was even a bingo club if I got desperate."

The couple lived there for six years but found the community feeling starting to fade: "We were burgled and my car was broken into every Friday night because of the disco-pubs."

Finally, a combination of the flower market's popularity – "you couldn't move on Sunday mornings" – and the mugging of nurses living next door prompted Mandy and Syd to move. They sold their

flat for £37,000, "to a reporter from *The Sun*, which made it even better," and moved to Blackheath. This time they viewed at least 70 properties before settling on a huge top-floor flat in a semi-detached house built in 1790. The property, uninhabited since the great storm of 1987, still bore the scars: "The roof tiles were ripped off and it had flooded. Our friend insisted that a huge stain on the carpet was the result of a murder."

In 1994 they paid £94,000 for the flat, which they loved for its "four big, square rooms".

In 1996 they decided on a second home in the "forgotten" resort of Broadstairs. They paid £39,000 for a two-bedroom flat on the top two floors of a house built in 1800. They now enjoy the benefits of a London flat and a coastal retreat: "It's stretched us, and the dying ferry industry means prices have not risen, but it's worth it."

GINETTA VERRICKAS

Those moves in brief...

1981 – bought Hackney flat for £38,000, sold for £67,000.

1990 – bought Blackheath flat for £94,000, now worth around £160,000.

1997 – bought second home in Broadstairs for £39,000. No increase in value.

If you would like your moves featured, write to: Nic Cittici, *Stepping Stones*, *The Independent*, 1 Conduit Sq, London E1 4 5DL. A prize of £100 will be awarded for the best story published before 31 March

• What price paradise?

The Caribbean is the latest hotspot for holiday homes. By Mary Wilson

FUNNY ISN'T it, the way the notion of a sun-drenched Caribbean beach shaded by palm trees becomes more inviting during the course of a freezing British winter? Perhaps not. The chain of islands that makes up the West Indies stretches from Florida right down to Venezuela, offering varying destinations from the vibrantly colourful to the restfully laid-back.

As it becomes easier and cheaper to get there – it is now possible to fly for as little as £250 a high-quality estates are being developed on a number of the islands. Buying early into one of these could be a very good investment indeed, with a ready-made strong rental market and rising values.

"We originally bought at Royal Westmoreland, a development in Barbados, because of the good climate and great infrastructure," says one of the development's home-owners. "Since making our investment less than two-and-a-half years ago, our capital appreciation has increased by more than 70 per cent – or a staggering \$1m over rental returns."

Barbados, the most easterly of the islands, has two excellent developments, one of which is based around an 18-hole golf course and another that is set around a man-made lagoon with apartments and villas right on the water, with their own moorings.

Royal Westmoreland, on the west coast, is a 500-acre resort, where around 280 villas and apartments are being built. Of these, about 100 are completed, and 11 of the latest development, 155 detached and semi-detached three-bedroom houses, are guaranteed to be completed by the millennium. The project continues to be managed, so that



Villa thriller: the Royal Westmoreland, in Barbados

no building work is carried out beside completed homes – and, by the end of next year, the majority will be quiet and free from construction," says Giles Rooney, the sales and marketing director.

The resort has a health and leisure club, a children's club, a bar and a restaurant, tennis courts and swimming pools. Prices range from \$600,000 (about £275,000) for a two-bedroom villa to \$1,500,000 for a five-bedroom fairway home with swimming pool.

The majority of our foreign

buyers are English, with the others being a mixture of Canadian, Italian, American and, of course, locals," says Harry Manning, of Harry Manning Associates, the local agent. There are also British agents, in the form of Humberts and Christopher Scott. Prices range from \$25,000 for a one-bedroom lagoon-front apartment to \$6,500,000 for a four-bedroom beach-front villa.

The most southerly islands are Tobago and Trinidad, only a few miles from the South American coast and out of the hurricane path. Tobago is the quieter of the two – Trinidadians go there to "chill out". Much of the 20-mile-long island is hilly and covered with rainforest – a beautiful, unspoilt place with idyllic beaches, some hardly used. Tobago has some of the best diving in the world, and developers are encouraged to protect this valuable asset.

On the south-western side, the Cumberland Hotel, Marble Arch, London W1, Royal Westmoreland: 0171-292 5000; Prestige Property Group: 01935 825770; FPD Savills: 0171-408 5517; Horry Manning Associates: 00 1 243 224 2661; Christopher Scott: 01983 721777; Humberts: 0171-629 0909

two-storey villa would cost £180,000, with the plot costing about £130,000.

"We expect there to be serious rental potential for these properties," comments Charles Weston-Saker, one of the agents FPD Savills, which is inviting offers for the development. A five-star Hilton hotel and the first show villas will be ready in November, as will the golf course, about 60 apartments and 40 plots have already been sold to Trinidadians.

The prettiest part of Tobago is in the north, and this is where the King's Bay Estate development is. Among the 600 acres of cocoa, palm and immortal trees, a small number of villas will be built, all with stunning views over the bay. In the first phase, there will be 25 large two-storey villas, all in plots of three-quarters of an acre.

The Great House, an old plantation house, is to be converted into a five-star restaurant, and down by the beach there will be a few cottages, which will form the hotel, with a beach bar and a restaurant. There will also be tennis courts, diving facilities, a nine-hole golf course and riding. Work starts on 1 April (really), and a show house will be ready by August. The Prestige Property Group, the sole agent in Britain, is selling the first phase for £225,000 to £235,000.

The Tabbago developments will be shown at the International Property Show (01420 520771), today and tomorrow at the Cumberland Hotel, Marble Arch, London W1. Royal Westmoreland: 0171-292 5000; Prestige Property Group: 01935 825770; FPD Savills: 0171-408 5517; Horry Manning Associates: 00 1 243 224 2661; Christopher Scott: 01983 721777; Humberts: 0171-629 0909

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HOT SPOT

VICTORIA PARK, EAST LONDON

A tale of Victorian values

Adam Kay is a husband, a father and a triathlete. When he was scouring Bethnal Green for a flat, however, it was the last of these categories which proved the most influential - and St Agnes Close, off Gore Road, near Victoria Park fitted the bill.

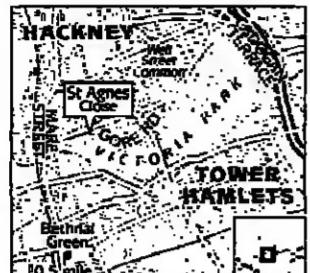
A 300 acre park was yards from his front door; the City was just 10 minutes by bicycle, and the flat appealed for other reasons, too.

It is in a modern block that was specifically designed to maximise light, heat and privacy, and his freeholder doesn't bicker over repairs or otherwise exploit the tenants.

His property is one of many in the area owned by the Crown Estate. "I definitely have the best landlady in the country," says Mr Kay.

Marriage, a baby and a move to suburbia revealed that Victoria Park was also a good investment: "I paid £60,000 in 1995. Last year it was re-evaluated for mortgage purposes at £95,000," says Mr Kay.

Most London parks are bordered by residential roads. The boot-shaped Victoria Park,



which extends from South Hackney into Tower Hamlets just east of Bethnal Green, has limited park-side housing, but there are compensations: two canals border the park, bringing waterside properties and warehouse conversions into the picture.

Just across the park, Well Street Common is encircled by handsome park-side homes. Victoria Park was a neglected, vandalised wreck in the Seventies and early Eighties until Tower Hamlets council spruced it up. Private housing, where council estates used to be, further enhanced the quality of the area.

"Kingsland estate was the worst, and it and some other bad ones came down," notes

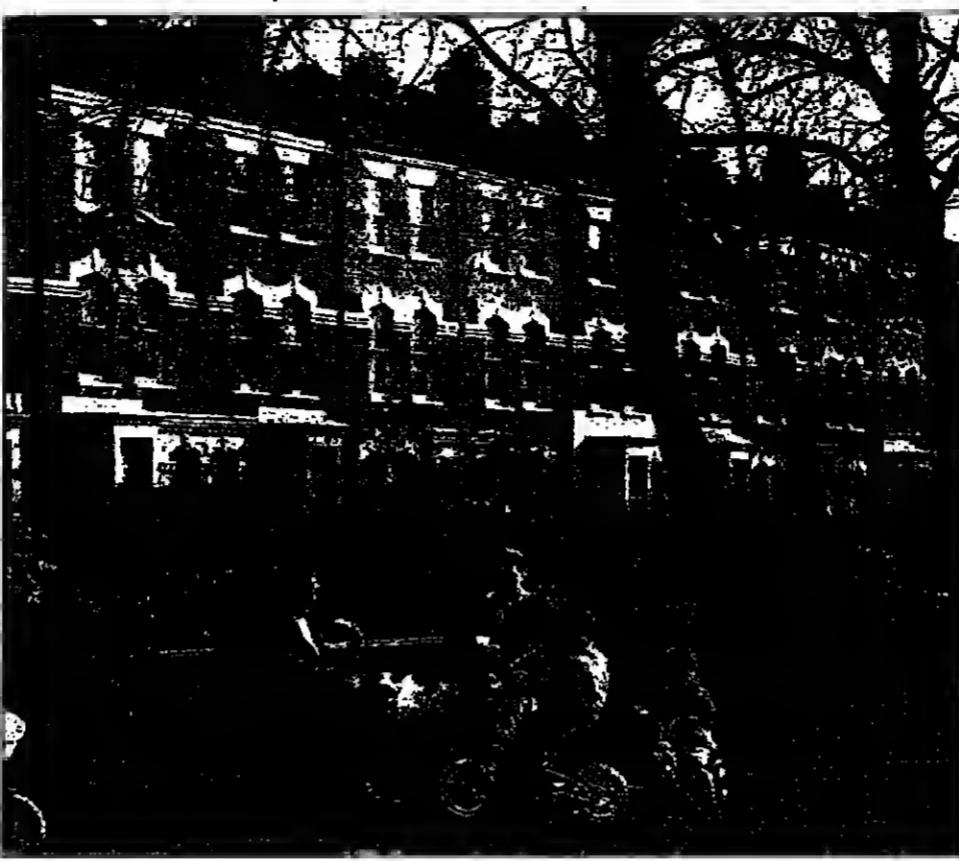
Philip Castle, a director of Sovereign House estate agents. "Lauriston School is a highly regarded state secondary school," he adds, noting that the young professionals who are attracted to the area because of its proximity to the City include families as well as singles.

"But Victorian houses are scarce and expensive, usually available only when the occupiers die and the Crown Estate sells them off."

The best Victorian houses can sell for more than £300,000, but flats are much cheaper: "The older properties are more fashionable and expensive, but generally one-bedroom conversions sell for £60,000-£70,000, and two bedrooms jump to £110,000," declares Mr Castle. "Parkside is a nice local authority estate. Two- and three-bedroom flats are available there in the £55,000-£65,000 range."

At the eastern edge of the park, Cadogan Terrace backs on to a motorway, but even in this location £300,000 might not be enough to buy a large family house.

ROBERT LIEBMAN



The best Victorian houses in the Victoria Park region sell for more than £300,000

THE LOW-DOWN

Prices: A three-bedroom loft in a converted warehouse overlooking the canal and Victoria Park is available at £145,000 at Keatons estate agents. Similar money can buy a three-bedroom freehold house (£140,000), while an additional £25,000 buys a two-bedroom flat occupying the upper two storeys of a Victorian house. In mid-March, Copthorn is releasing the third phase of Victoria Place at New Kingsland. Estate agents Sovereign will have price and other information on the two-, three-, and four-bedroom houses and two-bedroom flats.

Transport: The overall area is served by the Underground (Bethnal Green and Mile End) Central Line stations and in zone two or the overground (Cambridge Heath, Bethnal Green, Hoxton and Hackney Wick stations). The motorway adjacent to

Cadogan Terrace is the A102(M) for Blackwall Tunnel.

Shopping and dining: Well Street has a supermarket and popular outdoor market, and Victoria Park Village has trendy boutiques and restaurants. Mare Street, Hackney is a bustling high street.

The park: Victoria Park has a running track and changing rooms, tennis courts, fishing pitches for cricket,

hockey football and softball, playgrounds, a deer enclosure, an Old English Garden and a One O'Clock Club. The park's interesting history is related in the handsome park brochure (available on 0171-364 4951) from Crown Estates; Internet address: <http://www.crownestate.co.uk>:

"Property owned by the sovereign of the United Kingdom in right of the Crown" with origins dating back almost 1,000 years.

The park properties were purchased mainly between 1842 and 1845 and include 611 residences, public houses and other commercial premises.

Council tax: Hackney charges more than Tower Hamlets; respective charges are £526 and £439 for Band A and £1,579 and £1,318 for Band B.

Estate agents: Keatons: 0181-981 7768; Sovereign House: 0181-985 5800.

RODALIND RUSSELL

TEL: 0171 293 2222

PROPERTY: RESIDENTIAL

FAX: 0171 293 2505

Development

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Development

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Standen Park
LANCASTER

A Private Estate set in 20 acres of beautiful parkland

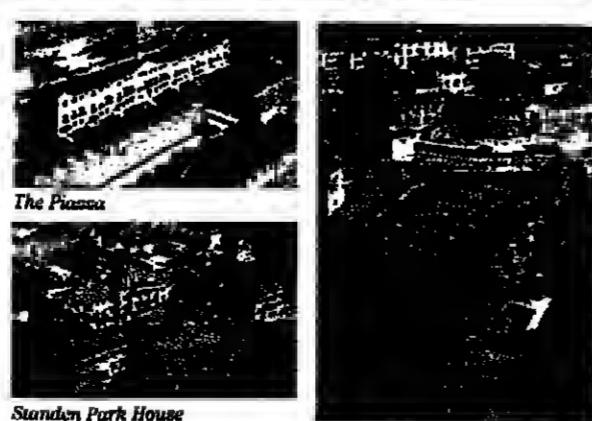
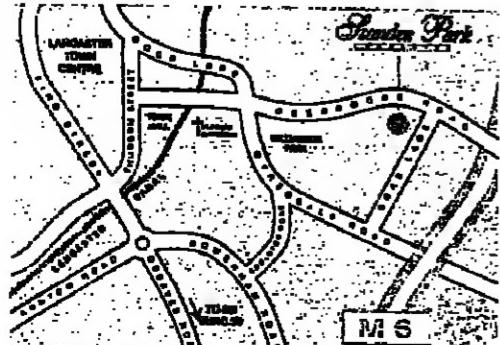
Bordered by mature trees with views across open farmland, Standen Park is situated next to Williamson Park where the Ashton memorial stands.

The classical Georgian architecture is the key to the three distinct elements that combine to create the new private estate.

- Standen Park House - twenty one 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 bedroom homes within a grade II listed building: Prices from £112,500 to £229,000.

- The Piazza - elegant 2, 3 and 4 bedroom three storey mews houses, all built around a central tree lined square and water feature: Prices from £152,000 to £160,000.

- Fifty one New Build 3, 4 and 5 bedroom homes that are spread throughout the landscaped grounds: Prices from £99,950 to £325,000.



HOW TO FIND US FROM THE M6
Take junction 34. Follow signs to Lancaster. From Lancaster follow signs to Ashton memorial, continue past Ashton memorial, (Quernmore Road). Standen Park is on the right hand side.

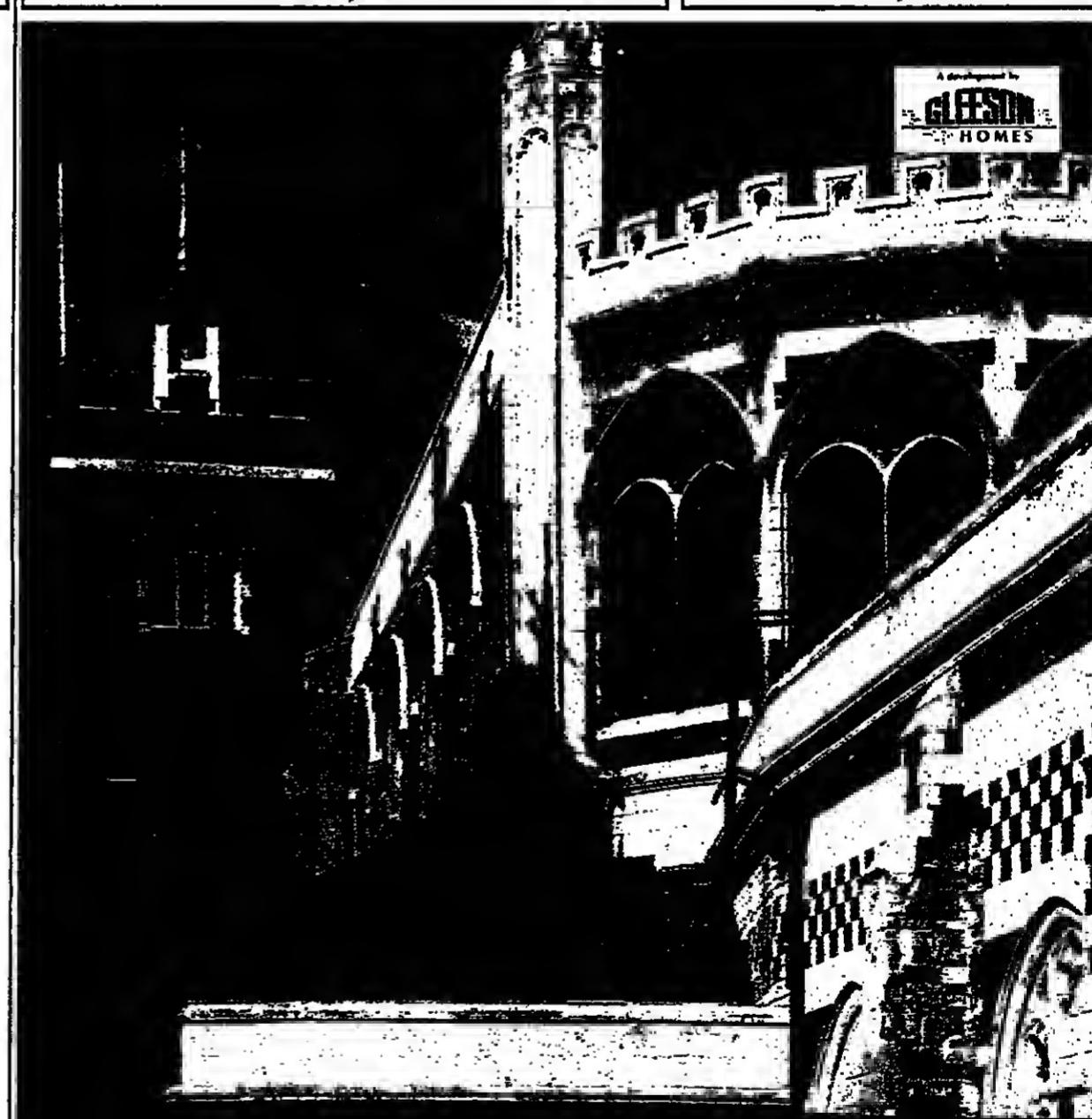
ALL ENQUIRIES:



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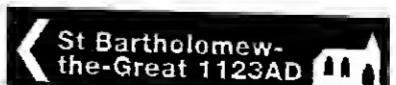
Piazza View Home opens Sat 20th - Sun 21st February
from 10.00am to 5.00pm.

TEL: 01254 670111



Rush hour in Bartholomew Close E1

New show flat open seven days a week: just follow the signs, we're off Little Britain and next door to The Church



- 39, 1 & 2 Bedroom Apartments
- 124 year lease
- Ready for Occupation
- 10 year Zurich Municipal building guarantee

PRICES FROM
£173,000 TO £299,000

ALL ENQUIRIES TEL: 0171 407 3669

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